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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

EXPLORING GENDER WITH DEAF WOMEN AND THEIR HEARING SISTERS

BY

TANIS MAUREEN DOE

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

IN

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATIONS

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

FALL, 1993

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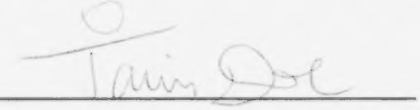

Tanis M. Doe # 3 - 1150 Yates St.
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3M8

June 22, 1993

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled EXPLORING GENDER WITH DEAF WOMEN AND THEIR HEARING SISTERS submitted by TANIS MAUREEN DOE in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology of Education.

Anne Marie Decore, Supervisor

Marilyn Assheton-Smith,
Committee Member

Carl Urion, Committee Member

Rosalind Sydie,
Committee Member

Mary Ann Bibby,
Committee Member

Carol Erting, External Reader
Gallaudet University

June 22, 1993

Dedication:

This research is dedicated to Deaf women who are role models for others, their sisters, their daughters, their mothers, and for all women who surmount the obstacle of language to form a sisterhood. This project is particularly dedicated to those sisters of deaf women who have become professional interpreters, commiting their lives to be a personal and occupational bridge between Deaf and hearing people. Finally, this research is also dedicated to all hearing feminists who have seen the need and the importance to include all women in liberation and have incorporated the issues of Deaf women in their activities and analysis.

ABSTRACT

Exploring Gender with Deaf Women and Their Hearing Sisters

by Tanis Maureen Doe

This dissertation explores the concept of gender with deaf women and their hearing sisters. Participants in the research discussed their views of gender roles, male and female attributes as well as issues of Deaf identity. Deaf women were interviewed using American Sign Language and hearing sisters were interviewed through professional interpreters. This feminist exploration describes the views of women who have not been active participants in research on this subject in the past. Descriptions and ethnographic analysis attempt to reveal the complicated relationship between identity as a deaf person and as a woman. The conclusions do not argue that deaf women are different or that perceptions of gender are shared among sisters. Instead the research reveals that deaf women, like their hearing sisters, develop their attitudes and understandings of gender in the context of their lives as mothers, friends, lovers and workers within society. The opportunity to study the topic of gender with deaf women has also demonstrated very specific issues in language and methodology relating to the use of videotaping and sign language in cross-cultural settings. This dissertation will be of particular interest to those studying issues of interpretation, meaning, discourse systems and gender in linguistics. This document is made more accessible to deaf people through a video taped version using sign language instead of printed English.

PREFACE:

If you were on a sinking ship, and you had to decide which life boat to get into, which boat would you join, the boat for deaf people, or the boat for women?

"the Deaf boat, of course"
"whichever one had room for me, but hopefully the deaf boat"
"Is there a boat for deaf women?"
"I would prefer the deaf boat, but not if they were all men, then I would choose the women's boat, depends if there were women who signed in the women's boat"
"the women's boat of course, I love women"

Deaf women do not have to choose between being deaf and being women. They can be both and they can experience both. But in this research questions were asked to determine what gender and gender roles meant to deaf women, and to their hearing sisters. Deaf women created new questions in this project because some of them saw deafness as more important than gender. In order to find out the meanings of gender it was also necessary to explore deaf identity. The women in this research answered many questions, and only some of their answers are represented in this project. The themes selected and domains that are used to describe the comments came from the women's interviews and the ideas the research was based on. One can never be perfectly objective and in this project there is an open subjectivity to examining a topic which I personally experience on a daily basis. This exploration was an initial look at a large subject for a small population, and hopefully, it will lead the participants to ask more questions, and for researchers to help them find the answers.

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Without the co-operation and input of all the informants and participants in the project, both Deaf and hearing, this research would not have been possible at all. There are several Deaf people who deserve acknowledgement for the special role they played in the development of this research and in my life during the years it took to complete it. For various reasons these women are particularly deserving of credit but they are also representative of others like them.
My daughter, Ann-Marie, who inspired me to find new ways to communicate and to impart a non-sexist education for Deaf children;
My mentor, Eleanor, who taught me to respect Deaf culture and then ensured that I would respect myself, as she did herself;
My friend, Sonya, who asked me questions and answered many of mine, but who all the while accepted me for who I was, illnesses and all;
My colleague, Leanor, who as a fellow student understood my need for knowledge and my desire to work despite or against medical advice; and
My student, Déna, who made me feel successful as a teacher, because she and her parents learned how important unconditional love is to all of us.

Lastly, and definitely not least, are my academic advisors and members of my committee who were patient with me and tolerated both my over-enthusiasm and sense of despair. Thank-you to Professor A.M. Decore who continually validated my work through encouragement and long-distance direction. A special thank you to Professor Carl Urion, who, by example, demonstrated the potential to overcome personal difficulties while pursuing academic excellence, and who also helped me put my priorities in order.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> I felt that deafness was the larger and more complex issue that transcended other human characteristics such as gender, race and age... First, I realized that being deaf and female was indeed a double-whammy! Both groups may suffer from stereotyped images, oppression by the majority, limited employment opportunities and lower pay. Being a deaf female could then result in second-class membership of either circle and thus a double dosage of negative ramifications. (Rosen cited in Holcomb and Wood, 1989:11)

At an international conference and festival held at Gallaudet University in 1989 called the Deaf Way, the authors of the book quoted above launched their publication as the first of its kind. Throughout Deaf history there had never been such a collection of information about deaf women. There were many categories listed in the contents for this book including sports, education, the arts and feminists. Deaf feminists were described as fighting for access to education as far back as 1880. Feminists who were deaf struggled to gain access to employment opportunities and careers closed to both Deaf people and women. This book, and in particular the woman who wrote the opening statement in the foreword were part of the genesis of this project. Women who are deaf have not been the subject or objects of research in any measurable degree with the exception of demographic and vocational testing reports. This research project attempted to bring the "voices" of deaf women into a structural context.

As the research design was being developed it was considered important to have "other" voices in the sample and the hearing sisters of deaf women seemed to be the most suitable candidates. All women in this research were part of a learning process that began by asking questions and has resulted in even more questions coming from their answers. As this topic is one which has not been thoroughly addressed in the existing sociological and educational literature, there was no attempt to deal with the entire scope of gender and deafness issues. This research intended to focus on what was

important to the deaf and hearing women participants as the research progressed.

The original research questions were:

a) What are the meanings of gender roles for deaf women who attended schools for the deaf and

b) are these roles different from those of their hearing sisters?

Some of the questions asked by women participants in the research include:

a) Is being deaf worse than being a woman?

b) How do deaf women learn family roles while living away from home?

c) Do we have something in common even if we cannot share a language?

This project will describe the gender roles based on information from deaf and hearing women, and provide a comparison and further analysis of the collected data. Although both of the original research questions remain quite broad, they provide a starting point for grounded research. The reason that the second question is important in this research is to assess if gender roles of deaf women are strongly related to their being women and thus similar in nature to their hearing counterparts. Both Deaf women and their sisters were interested in this question. Deaf identity became a central issue as women responded to questions about gender, and this is reflected in my conclusions.

Because the interviews were conducted in private, most of the sisters felt that the final report would be of considerable interest to them and would benefit others to understand deaf and hearing opinions about gender. At least two women indicated that they thought their sisters would have similar ideas and opinions about gender despite their differences in hearing. Other women expected differences in opinion regardless of hearing status and were eager to learn how their sisters felt. While all the participants were indeed female, their views may be different from each other as a result of their deafness and the educational responses to their deafness. Clearly it would be difficult to separate the effects and impact of hearing loss per se and the result of exposure to education but it is important to ask what the deaf women think influenced their views.

This research will not generalize from its findings, but rather will use this qualitative data to describe further the issue of gender socialization and its effects on deaf women. This project will provide information necessary to additional enquiry and future research with deaf women. It is particularly important to consider the research design and the special techniques used in the process which allowed the deaf participants full access and provided data which is not distorted by the translation from native sign language to English.

In addition to the section on methods used in this process, the concluding chapter includes an introspective commentary on the procedures and challenges that formed the basis of the research. Finally, a concurrent objective and intentional outcome of this work is to empower deaf and hearing participants to explore their own ideas of gender. While the research collected information from women there was also an attempt to provide information and assistance to participants who requested this. Unless there is some benefit to the women who participated, this research will not have provided the catalytic value so necessary for social change and so critical for personal growth and political freedom.

A. Aims of the Research

The research is intended to explore the meaning of gender for deaf women and their hearing sisters. It focuses on women's attitudes about gender roles and their educational experiences. There are two specific presuppositions which may be explored by this research although they are not the exclusive focus of the project. It was expected that:

A) hearing women will be more articulate in their ideas and may have less traditional views relating to gender roles compared to deaf women who might express more traditional views on gender roles despite a possible reluctance to identify with them.

B) deaf women will identify more strongly with deaf culture and much less with gender and will therefore express less concern for gender roles than hearing women who may use gender as a major category in their lives.

The reason for these two apparently contradictory propositions is the inherent conflict in being both deaf and female. The expectation that deaf women will identify more strongly with deaf culture comes from an understanding of women in ethnic and racial minorities who tend to associate mostly with the minority status. For deaf women, the language used by members of deaf culture binds the community such that users of sign language are more united than gender-based groups within the deaf community (See Rosen, 1974: 5).
In a presentation to the National Conference on Deaf and Hard of Hearing People, Rosen, (1988:1) presented this contradiction very effectively:

> If we were on a sinking ship, would we get on the lifeboat for deaf people (with deaf men) or the lifeboat for women (with hearing women)? Although many of us consider deafness to be a common denominator and to have a pervasive effect on daily life, a growing number of us realize, too, the need to ensure that gender-based discrimination, whether intentional or unintentional, does not occur.

This concept of identifying first with deaf culture has been developed from conversations with informants who expressed concern that gender was the focus of this research while deaf culture is the focus of deaf women's lives. It has also been identified in the literature as an issue of mental health, where people consciously choose to be full members of Deaf culture instead of marginal members of hearing culture (Glickman,1986:1). Women who hear do not have deaf culture to associate with, and although they may have other categories such as religion or occupational status to relate to, gender is likely to be a primary factor in their identities. Women who have other issues in their identity, such as racial minority or religious minority status may experience similar kinds of identity issues where white middle class majority women find gender a primary issue because they are born into their own culture groups as dominant members.

This assumption is not to suggest deaf women do not have ideas about gender but that they will identify more strongly with deaf culture when asked questions. In fact, because of the isolated education that deaf people receive in the residential schools for the deaf, it was expected that deaf women will

have more traditional attitudes regarding gender roles. Hearing women, of similar ages, may have been exposed to many more opportunities and through media and public education could have developed more flexible gender roles. Deaf institutional programs have been compared to Goffman's "total institution" by ethnographic researchers Evans and Falk (1986:13) :

> Few people outside the residential school will have linguistic or symbolic access to the child, to his (her) definitions of reality. Black and white, rich and poor, male and female are all thrown together in one place. For these children, the school serves as a comprehensive or total institution that provides the construction of the first self.

Hearing educators of deaf children have almost exclusive influence over the learning process of their students since parents who do not sign, the media and the community in general are not accessible to deaf children because of the inability to hear and communicate orally/in English. Hearing students, while still exposed to stereotyping and various forms of discrimination have also had more access to information which could have affected their attitudes about gender. Because of wider educational opportunities and better English skills, it is assumed that hearing women will be better able to express ideas about gender and that these ideas will be less traditional than the expressed ideas of deaf women.

As one of the additional aims of this project is to make deaf women more aware of the issues of "gender", the research design took into account the incompatible vocabulary between hearing, English speakers and deaf signers. The words: gender, sexist, masculine, feminine and even male and female do not have corresponding standardized manual signs that are used in the Deaf community. The signs for man and woman are used by interpreters and the Deaf community to represent the concepts of gender and sex identity when referring to English words but this is only used in context and usually the word itself fingerspelled for clarity. Even within the hearing, English speaking community's vernacular use of "gender" and sex roles there is not a standard definition and so it is expected that there will be a relatively low level of "gender consciousness" within both the deaf and hearing groups. The advantage that hearing women have is the range of English words to describe their ideas about gender. Hearing women may,

however know less than they thought about Deaf culture. Deaf women may have a much wider range of expressions and ideas about Deaf culture than they do about gender.

B. Rationale for the Research

While the sociology of education has extensively explored issues of ethnicity, race, class, sexual orientation and gender as they are integrated into the schooling process, disability and specifically deafness has been neglected as a social construct since it has often been the domain of the medical/rehabilitation profession. Most disability oriented research has focussed on disabling conditions rather than on the experiences of racial or ethnic minorities, women, and working class people. "Having a disability presumably eclipses these dimensions of social experiences" (Fine & Asch, 1988:3). Deaf women are often overlooked in sociological and educational research because they are either not included as women (because they are deaf) or de-gendered as deaf 'people'. A focus which specifically attempts to integrate womanhood and deafness as factors influencing socialization will begin to address the deficiencies in previous work.

This work will refer to deaf women using a lower case "d" because the goal is not to single out their "deafness" as the leading characteristic. In some progressive literature by deaf researchers and at the recent meeting of the World Federation of the Deaf in Japan, capitalized "Deaf" people refers to the culturally deaf population who use sign language and associate primarily with the "Deaf" community. (See Woodward, 1972 and Erting and Woodward, 1974) The lower case description of "deaf" people refers to the severe loss of hearing that does not necessarily result in membership in the "Deaf" community. In this research it is not desirable to use capitalized "Deaf" to refer participants until after such an identity has been self-disclosed by the women themselves. Also, since most of the material being cited is not clearly relating to culturally deaf people, a lower-case "d" will be used for generic references to deaf people. However, when referring to what deaf people define as their culture or the community of deaf people which self-identifies as "Deaf" the capital "D" will be used. In the section of analysis and

conclusions the capital case "D" will be used to refer to the participants in the research who self-identify and the lower case "d" used when referring to deaf education or schooling without a specific person in mind. In addition, there may be times when quotations or direct references imply a purposeful use of either case. This is an issue which has both linguistic and political importance among Deaf people. This research intends to respect the wishes of women participants and the Deaf community as much as possible.

This research is clearly an exploration of issues. There is a demonstrated need to first review the factors involved in a problem before trying to solve it. To address the needs of deaf women, this exploratory study provides for some basic descriptions of meanings of gender and a supportive process to collect more information. This supportive process empowers the research participants to explore their own identities as well as provide information to the researcher. According to Babbie (1989:80): "exploratory studies are most typically done for three purposes: (1) to satisfy the researcher's curiosity and desire for better understanding, (2) to test the feasibility of undertaking a more careful study, and (3) to develop the methods to be employed in a more careful study."

The research will provide some satisfaction of a desire to understand for the researcher, but also give the participants a chance to discover more about their own ideas. I did not attend a school for the deaf and have acquired both my hearing loss and sign language after adolescence. My research background in both education, political science and sociology, combined with feminist beliefs, led me to select this research topic. In order for this research to be success for me it must also meet some needs for the participants. This research has allowed deaf and hearing women to consider less obvious attitudes and values and might enable them to reconsider their views and "name" the processes that affect them. It will provide a stimulus for deaf women and their hearing sisters to communicate with each other. More information in this area of study can improve awareness about gender and deafness among both deaf and hearing women while respecting language choices. This information can benefit all interested readers.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE ISSUES AND THE LITERATURE

A. The Oppression of Deaf People

There are many ways to analyze the oppression of deaf people but this introduction will start with the socio-economic factors which are so central to the means of production and social relations in society (Rodda and Grove, 1987). In an analysis of the first national census of deaf people in the United States, Schein and Delk (1974:9) concluded that "the clearest measure of the penalty exacted by deafness is personal income." The underemployment of deaf people is due, not so much to the handicap of deafness as it is to the linguistic downgrading, undereducation and undertraining that deaf children and youth have been getting in their programs (Schein and Delk, 1974:35). If education can be seen as the non-violent perpetuation of inequality by responding to the interests of the dominant class, then deaf education is similarly a means to the subordination of the deaf population.

> Schooling always represents an introduction to, preparation for and legitimation of particular forms of social life. It is always implicated in the relations of power, social practices and the favouring of forms of knowledge that support a specific vision of past, present and future. (Maclaren, 1989: 166)

For deaf students, the vision up until quite recently has been determined by hearing people and imposed on them through an education process intended to "help" them. The instrument of this education - as it is for non-deaf students - has been the use of language. As tools, the use of oral-only language and the modification of American Sign Language to fit English syntax, have both been used to teach (undereducate) deaf people into a marginal status in hearing society. (See Doe, 1988 for discussion on marginalization) The lack of competent verbal skills, and the inability to perceive the spoken word, could conceivably be overcome through manual-visual means. Using American Sign Language (ASL) seems to be a logically viable method of instruction and communication yet the lack of acceptance of ASL in the schooling process has meant that young deaf

students acquire neither an oral nor a manual language and often have great difficulties mastering linguistic patterns. (For extensive discussion on this issue see Carver, 1989; Johnson, Liddell, & Erting, 1989, Nash & Nash 1981.) This is certainly not to suggest that all deaf students have problems in acquiring language, but to demonstrate that the educational process has not made language as readily accessible as it could be to deaf students.

The current efforts towards education for literacy and empowerment of deaf adults has only begun and is based on a movement of deaf rights not on the liberal theories of educators. What has been lacking in the historical treatment of deaf students, and continues to be problematic, is communication between the powerless objects of education - the deaf- and the dominant keepers of knowledge- the hearing (Boese, 1968). Historically, deaf people were denied rights of property ownership, ability to enter into contracts, employment and even 'salvation' because of their deafness (and muteness in some situations). When education was provided to deaf students, historian Harlan Lane (1984) claims, it was to produce a person as close to a hearing person as possible - to normalize or rehabilitate - rather than to educate. In general, almost all the research on deaf people until this decade has been biased in favour of the users of oral language (Lane, 1987:6). Deaf people can be categorized with other disabled people and poor people as being powerless.

> Disproportionate numbers of persons who are poor, deaf or otherwise disabled share a number of psychological orientations... They have also been described as being immature, impulsive, dependent, manipulative, and as lagging in academic and vocational achievement despite normal intellectual potential. (Schlesinger, 1986:1)

Even more specifically, deaf women are influenced by the stereotypes of submissiveness, inferiority and dependence which apply to them both as women and as deaf people. "Deaf women internalize these social expectations and have difficulties dealing with the role expectations of men in the deaf community, especially if their personal views differ from cultural views on sex roles"(Rosen, 1977:83). It should be understood that being both deaf and female is not simply the combination of both characteristics,

but more like a racial or ethnic identity which changes gender status as well as adding the culturally specific factors of the minority. Deaf women are subordinated by and within the deaf community as well as in hearing society in general. As deaf people they face systemic discrimination and marginalization that is complicated by their being female.

Historically, deaf students were more likely to attend a residential school than hearing children. Because very few cities had specialized provisions for deaf students, provincial or regional schools were developed and deaf students were sent to live in institutions for the duration of their education. Although most major cities now have options for students with hearing impairments ranging from a teacher's aid within a regular class to separate classes in a regular school, the deaf community as an adult population was primarily educated in residential schools. The residential school has a near monopoly on the structural definitions of the world which the deaf child may experience (Evans & Falk, 1986:12). Because of the 'total institutional' impact of living in schools for the deaf, the deaf women have only limited access to outside images of gender and of adult identities. Hence, schools for the deaf must be addressed as primary socializing agents for deaf women. Women in this research will be asked to consider how important their education was in the development of their current ideas about gender.

Disability and deafness cannot be interchanged without caution but much of the recent work in oppression theories has been done with generic disability in mind. Abberly, (1987,8) suggests that "disability is a particular form of oppression, in that sexual and racial oppression are wholly ideological whereas impairment is "real" and forms a bed-rock upon which justificatory oppressive theories are based." The significance of this perspective should not be underestimated since deafness is a qualitatively different deviation from the "norm" compared to being the "other" (female) to the male. While some arguments may justify discrimination on the basis of male superiority such arguments for disability work much better when a person is excluded for reasons of physically being unable to do something. For deaf people, the physical disability is not in performing work but in hearing general spoken communication. While the deaf worker can lift, type, fix, create and clean he or she cannot easily hear the instructions given and thus has

greater difficulty learning and doing work than a non-deaf worker. However, the barrier becomes less significant if the instructions are in sign language and the co-workers can communicate effectively without speech. Deaf people, like people with disabilities, are excluded on the basis of their medical status rather than their individual abilities. This affects men and women in different ways because of the different social roles ascribed to men and women. For deaf women there is an even smaller range of options in terms of role models and roles because of the multiple minority status of being both deaf and female.

> "The lack of approved social roles for disabled women derives from a constellation of confounding forces. Disabled women (like racial or ethnic minority women) experience a major disadvantage in relation to their relevant single minority reference groups: disabled men and non-disabled women." (Fine and Asch, 1985:7)

One analyst has suggested that "the effects of disability on economic and gender-related roles are likely to have a more significant effect on the experience of disability than race..." (Oliver, 1990:75) because of the strength of socially sanctioned gender-role prescriptions. The next sections will review some of the proscriptive and prescriptive gender roles for women and then discuss research on deaf women.

B. Gender Roles for Women

There is a large body of literature dealing with gender roles and much of it is now coming from feminist writers. The issue that needs to be addressed for this research project is not exactly what "are" gender roles but what are they perceived to be by deaf women and their hearing sisters. Traditional socially determined roles for women and men in North America were that men worked for pay and women stayed home with children (Bem & Bem, 1971:88). There are many different arguments from functional to biological to free will that explain the differences between men and women, but many have concluded that women are socialized into specific roles and generally tend to accept these roles (Bem & Bem, 1971:95). The feminist view is that differences between men and women are the result of differential treatment,

differential socialization and childrearing (Freeman, 1971:132). In addition socialized roles have values attached and male roles and masculine characteristics are more highly valued than female roles. This creates a conflict in that girls are exposed to traditional role models in their mothers and female teachers but are also taught that these are not the most valued roles in society, and that they, as girls are expected to end up in these less valued roles (Freeman, 1971:124).

More specifically, characteristics associated with women include being passive, dependent, and emotional while men are aggressive, active and instrumental (Weitzman, 1975:105). Although these are seen in Western cultures, anthropologists have noted that other ethnic groups have different, inverted or modified gender roles so these are not the result of biology but of cultural definition (Weitzman, 1975:109). The role of schooling is also important in reinforcing stereotypes. Through restricted course choices, assessment processes and sexist curricula, gender roles are continually taught to students. Although children learn gender roles and gender preferences early in life, through parents and peers, the further exposure to books and school structures enforce compliance to roles.

Deaf people who are in residential schools are even more directly impacted by the educational enforcement of gender role "norms". Norms are enforced by the penalization of deviation and this also relates to the value put on masculine and feminine characteristics. The penalties for boys who deviate from norms are often greater and more harshly enforced although girls have less freedom in occupational roles (Weitzman, 1975: 114). It is also clear that class and race have an impact on roles. For example, black girls are often more aggressive than middle class white girls (Weitzman, 1975:119). Both within dominant society and cultural minorities, the penalties for deviation can be severe enough to limit the roles available for men and women. Deaf women also have the limitations of "deaf" roles and the expectations of being female within deaf culture so these differences and roles are important factors in understanding deaf women. Ethnic, race and social class influences on gender roles are important to this project because deaf people can be seen as belonging to a cultural group. The research into this area is not clear about how the factors interact but it is thought that

gender roles are a reflection of class and ethnic positions in society relative to dominant society. (See Titley, 1990, MacLaren, 1989; Mazurek, 1987.) For example black middle class children have more overtly stereotyped roles than white middle class children, partly in reflection of black families' attempts to fit in (Romer & Cherry, 1980:249). So, in effort to become more accepted by the dominant class, minorities alter their expectations to meet the perceived norm. Black and white working class females were more likely to be family oriented, housewives, and working in domestic capacity than middle class women who were well educated, likely to be employed and less family oriented (Romer & Cherry, 1980:252). This difference between the classes in gender roles may be noted in the differences between deaf women and their hearing sisters, regardless of their original economic status, since deaf girls were raised in residential schools and their sisters in public schools there may be 'class-like" differences. For example:

> At SSD, language replaces Berstein's social class as the key indicator of prestige and acceptance. It is language (of whatever type) that gives one entree to peer groups and classroom assignments (reflecting various levels of difficulty)." (Evans and Falk,1986:204)

These differences must be considered in the analysis of deaf women's perceptions of gender roles since they may be the result of their cultural socialization rather than their deafness. Being in a residential institution, being part of deaf culture and being isolated from hearing people are all possible factors in the development of gender roles. As deaf women have not been researched in this way before, all possible options must be considered and the responses of deaf participants carefully reviewed with all these factors in mind.

Lastly, there is significant research in the area of linguistic discrimination and sexism. There is clearly, a continued use of the male pronoun as a generic and it can be used both specific to male and as a gender neutral reference (Wise & Rafferty, 1982: 1189). Although the female pronoun can also be used in this way, it is more often used for specific reference to females. It is argued that much of the so-called gender neutral testing, or curricula, are in fact gender-loaded because many children identify the

neutral term as being male (Wise & Rafferty, 1982:1191). When children see words like firefighter, letter carrier and even doctor, they still consider these to refer to men. In sign language there are additional complications in the use of gender-free signs because there are no gendered pronouns. It is not possible to compare changes from 'he/she' references to sign language because a place holder, or pointed finger is used to refer to people (pronouns) that have already been discussed and so there is no gender attribute. There is normally an ending added to signs meaning that a verb changes to a noun (dance to dancer) which avoids the endings which are gender loaded (actor/actress). Since it is through language that deaf and hearing women's views are constructed and expressed, the existence of discrimination in language and the influences of linguistic differences must be recognized.

C. Research on Women Who are Deaf

There is not very much work done in this area, but the existing literature will be reviewed because some of it has errors that should be avoided in this project. Following up on the importance of language, an article that reviewed sex role stereotyping in sign language pointed out some perceived sexism. The authors claimed that signs used by the deaf reinforced values that the female was talkative and the male intellectual because there were signs near the mouth meaning woman and the male signs were near the forehead (Jolly & O'Kelly, 1980:289). The article also suggested that sign language was a pictographic language (Jolly & O'Kelly, 1980:286) which is inaccurate since there several different sign languages which are completely distinct and not iconic nor representative of symbols such as pictograms. Sign language is a manual-visual language which represents meaning rather than words. In my opinion, this specific error of perceiving sexism in the signs is the result of uninitiated researchers observing a language they do not understand. The actual origins of the American Sign Language signs for man and woman come from putting on different types of hats. For the male it is the indication of tipping a hat and for the female the drawing of the bonnet string across the cheek. In other sign languages the gestures of facial hair or the presence of breasts are used to differentiate between male and female. In fact, because of the person-ending used in sign language there is no

identification of gender unless specified in context. Also there is no sign for him or her as the reference to a person is made by pointing to a position that is used as a place holder whether for a thing, person or place.

In a survey of deaf college students Cook and Rossett found most deaf women to still hold traditional stereotyped roles.

> The combination of ineffective vocational counselling and isolation from the contemporary world of work leads to fewer choices and the resulting lower remuneration and higher unemployment. Therefore, while the deaf individual suffers discrimination and limitations of job possibilities, the deaf female endures a situation defined both by her deafness and her femaleness. (1975:341)

It should be acknowledged that this research only surveyed college students. For each deaf woman who reached college level, there would be several more who never graduated from high school. This population represents an 'elite' of the deaf community and although it is important to do this research with available subjects, it is likely that those deaf respondents had far more opportunity and information than the average deaf woman.

A Canadian survey done in Edmonton assessed what the researchers expected to be stereotypical views regarding occupational choices for men and women and found that there were "no differences due to sex for values related to sex stereotyping" (Fitzsimmons & Butson, 1986:104). Now, this survey was done almost ten years after the previously mentioned one, it was done in a city which has a school for the deaf and a large professional population in the deaf community. There are still some questions about the accuracy of the survey and the validity of the results. Questions were asked about how to do a job depicted in drawings and some of the drawings were of women working, some of men working and some of both. However, the wording of the questions was not clear enough to conclude that the respondents were not stereotyping the occupations presented because the language used implied that both men and women should be doing the work: " Should _____ be done by men, women or both ?" (Fitzsimmons & Butson, 1986:108).

One major difficulty was that the survey questions were signed to the respondents yet only the English version was reported in the article. One of the problems in research with deaf people is having to use an interpreter when the researcher is a non-signer, and all the communication must go through a translation process which often results in some distortion and misunderstandings. If language is so vital to the process of socialization and is a tool of sexism and linguistic discrimination, the subtleties of language must be taken into consideration.

Another research project (Stauffer and Long, 1990:11) attempted to compare hearing and deaf men and women on the area of sex roles but they used a written instrument to collect data. Their conclusions suggested that "deaf young men and women graduating from high school still hold substantially more conservative attitudes towards sex roles than do their hearing peers" (Stauffer and Long, 1990:10). The conclusions were based on true and false answers to constructed questions administered in writing to 57 young men and women, with ten deaf females and 11 deaf males. All subjects were between ages of 16 and 19 and the hearing students attended a public high school while the deaf students attended a State School for the Deaf. Although the instrument was a true-false scale in writing it was interpreted into sign language by an interpreter for the students who could not understand the English. (Stauffer and Long, 1990:6) It is most likely that the comparison between answers by deaf participants and hearing participants would have been different if the questions originated in sign language for the deaf and English for the hearing, rather than using a translated version. The significance of this research is its analysis that hearing status had more effect than gender when comparing all four groups. Although this finding supports the premise of the current project, it also directs the research towards determining the reasons for this difference and not just verifying the existence of it.

An American research project on the playmate preferences among deaf and hearing preschool children also took into account the ethnic and age preferences (Lederberg, Chapin, Rosenblatt & Vandell, 1986). The study looked at play patterns among children in a preschool which included both

deaf and hearing children of various ethnic origins and ages. They found that most children preferred to play with other children who shared similar characteristics. This is interesting because it shows that deaf children are as much 'like' non-deaf children as ethnic minority children are like white children, in that they have similar preferences. The only effect of deafness found, was to decrease the amount of gender segregation that occurred. The results suggest that the development of ethnic, gender and age preferences is not dependent on language (Lederberg et al, 1986:375).

Another perspective in gender and disability comes from the analysis and autobiographical accounts of disabled women. Saviola, who has a physical disability, wrote an article exploring the contradictions and difficulties of being a disabled woman. She explores the problem of being dependent physically and psychologically on others and having feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy and fear (Saviola, 1981:112). There is a problem in that women are expected to marry, but women who are disabled are not expected to be sexual or to marry and so they are socialized to be passive, dependent and 'suffering' while men are encouraged to be self supporting and independent even if they are disabled (Saviola, 1981: 114). This is an interesting observation because women who are deaf are generally not placed in the same category as being disabled, and they will most often marry another deaf person so they are not isolated because of their disabilities. Deaf women still experience a conflict of being both deaf and a woman but the stigma of disability is not the same as for women with physical disabilities.

One of the presuppositions stated for this research about deaf women not associating strongly with gender identity is supported by some research on disabled women. Are disabled women less "sexual or less gendered"? Disability related research brings up the important question of whether the less stereotyped person is in fact preferable to the "normalized, gender-bound person". "From a feminist perspective, we might see the failure of the culture to leave its heavy sex-typing brand on the disabled girl as a liberation. Is independence and self-sufficiency the product of avoidance; is it the outcome of marginalizing the disabled girl or of repressing her sexuality?" (Fine & Asch, 1988: 132). This research will consider whether

deaf women do in fact have less stereotypical views or perhaps they are more stereotyped yet less aware of this process.

There are two other sources of information found with specific focus of deaf women. One was an article in *The Deaf American* which focussed on deaf women in history. Rosen (1984) described deaf women who had been left out of deaf history in areas such as academia, sports, deaf organizations and public service. She explored the roles of deaf women in the deaf community and demonstrated how they had been left out of most deaf history materials, including publications produced by the deaf. One comment identified the issue of married couples in the administration of deaf schools where only the husband was given credit when in fact the deaf woman (wife) was an active player in the development of schools for the deaf (Rosen, 1984:4)

In 1974, one edition of *Gallaudet Today* was entirely devoted to issues of deaf women. It included such issues as deaf women scholars, deaf women in employment, Miss Deaf America, and several profile articles on successful deaf women leaders. This edition, however, did not explore issues of sexism or gender bias within the deaf community although it related the problems of facing double discrimination of being a female deaf person. An excerpt here reflects the tone of the issue (Smith, 1974:7):

> There is little incentive for deaf women to become much else than wives and mothers especially during their high school years. It would seem to me that this incentive comes at a later time when a deaf woman begins to evaluate her life. Witness the number of married deaf women returning to school. This number may not be overwhelming, but I think it indicates the slow pace with which deaf people finally arrive at the levels achieved by normally hearing people. By the time the phenomenon of the "liberated" woman really touches the deaf community, it will probably be a thing of the past in normally hearing society.

Considering the long history of that publication and the importance of women's issues, there is very little emphasis on gender in the literature by and about deaf people. In fact the literature about deaf education and deaf culture almost never refers to deaf men and women, but instead uses

inclusive language such as deaf students, deaf children, or deaf people. An interesting example of this is a study done on the mental health issues affecting deaf students in post-secondary education (Stewart, 1991). This study tried to identify the problems among deaf students and look at what was important to them. Post-secondary institutions were surveyed and the results were tabulated into programme and student data. Of all the tables and conclusions reached none identified the difference between male and female students. Some of the domains used included: survival and reproduction, belonging and love, power, freedom, and fun (Stewart, 1991:228). Despite the obvious significance of gender in the reproduction category, the issues of unwanted pregnancies, rape, sexually transmitted diseases and sexual abuse were not broken down by gender. In fact, all references to results used the neutral term "students". When women and men are mentioned, in other reports, it is for demographic purposes only and very little analysis of the significance of any of these demographic differences. This is partially a reflection of the prioritization of deafness over other issues but it is also evidence of neglect in addressing gender issues of deaf women. In the literature reviewed both deaf and hearing authours tend to priorize deaf issues over gender issues, but where there is a focus on women it does tend to come from deaf women writers and/or researchers.

D. Deaf Schooling in Western Canada

Although the emphasis of this research is to find out how deaf and hearing women perceive and experience "gender", it is helpful to understand the context of schooling for deaf students, in general, and more specifically for the participants. There is a need to state that schooling has played an important role in all children's socialization, not just in deaf schools and not just for gender roles. Usually a lengthy review of the literature would be necessary to demonstrate the validity of the following statement; however, for the purposes of this project, the context of schooling will be limited to the intentional education of deaf students in residential schools. This statement is offered to put deaf education into the context of the social reproduction role that schools play:

> In modern society, schooling reproduces the distribution of cultural capital among social classes. The content of the dominant schooling is the culture that corresponds to the interests of the dominant class. This constitutes cultural capital, the chief instrument of transforming power relations into legitimate authority. (Collins, 1982: 180)

Some historical background will be reviewed and then some student based information will be presented. This section is based on information from former students recollecting their experiences, and material taken from yearbooks or other deaf authored documents. The Jericho Hill School for the Deaf, as it is now known, was originally established by the Government of British Columbia in 1915. Although it was housed in part of a hearing school, it was completely segregated or self-contained. There were some off-campus programs for young deaf children and students came from out of province to be educated in British Columbia. After purchasing property near Point Grey in Vancouver, the Jericho Hill School for the Deaf and Blind was opened in 1922. It became the Jericho Hill School in 1953 with its description being "A Special School for Aurally or Visually Handicapped Children" (British Columbia, 1954: 130). In 1992, it changed and became part of Burnaby School District programs South Slope Elementary and Burnaby South Secondary School.

The Alberta School for the Deaf did not open until the fall of 1956, and it was then that deaf students from Alberta returned home from Vancouver, Manitoba and Montreal to attend a residential school in their own province. (Alberta, 1957: 100) The research participants will be graduates of both schools, who attended after 1956 and up to 1980. The histories of the school are fairly similar in their progression from oralism to using sign language. There was a major focus on the development of speech and language "with suitable time for cooking, sewing, woodworking, typesetting and the usual subjects of the curriculum of the province" at the Alberta School for the Deaf. (Alberta, 1961:84) Up until 1961, when fingerspelling was first introduced, all formal communication and instruction was in speech, auditory training and lipreading. One deaf woman graduate admitted that sign language was

used frequently in the dormitories between deaf students but that it was not allowed in classrooms.[1]

The Jericho Hill School was only slightly faster in its introduction of sign language, but it also opened much earlier. A former student recalled that it was in 1935 that oralism began to weaken, as students who had attended for over ten years were still inefficient at lipreading. Sign language was used covertly but with ease and great expression by students during this oral-only instruction era. [2] After hiring a supervisor from the United States, Dr. McDonald, the deaf students were finally exposed to adult deaf role models. The influence of this new supervisor included convincing the administration to hire deaf people. There were two deaf staff hired shortly after the introduction of sign language, which was a gradual phasing in from older to younger children. A former student admitted "oralism was strong and English hard- can't alter communication to American Sign Language overnight - it took 12 years to do it."[3]

In 1953 the Superintendent's Report to Government boasted the achievement of the school by writing, "our senior deaf class reached a new level of academic achievement for this school by advancing into a number of grade ten subjects" (British Columbia, 1954: 186). Although these students were between 18 and 19 years old it was seen as a major improvement over the limited achievement in the past. Several years later the school was announcing the success of ten deaf students who had passed Gallaudet entrance exams. Four of these students were able to skip the preparatory year and become freshmen. (British Columbia, 1964: 120) Gallaudet College was a chance to become educated with peers who were deaf but

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1. Conversation in sign language with informant S. Moyer, former student of Alberta School for the Deaf, Edmonton, 1990. This comment was confirmed by former teachers of the deaf and also by another student. However, after reading the final thesis the original informant also asked another student who felt some signing was allowed around 1958.

2. Telephone Device for the Deaf (TDD/TTY) conversation with M.McDonald, former student and active historian for Jericho Hill School, Vancouver, 1991.

3. Direct quotation from transcript of TTY conversation with M.McDonald, former student and active historian for Jericho Hill School, Vancouver, 1991.

there were very few alternatives to this option. Many deaf students who graduated from Gallaudet came back to Canada as teachers or professionals.

Even with minimal exposure to deaf adults at the school, the students benefited from role models. However, until 1945 the deaf staff were only working in gardening and domestic capacities. Today there are many deaf teachers and several child care counsellors and support staff. The curricula at both schools reveal that there was a general focus on preparation for manual trades and domestic work. The only real academic opportunities for deaf students at either school was the hope of attending Gallaudet College, and this was only possible for some of the students.

Both Vancouver and Edmonton are large cities which have significant numbers of deaf people and organizations. The presence of an adult deaf community, educated deaf professionals and organized culture or political action may have had a developmental effect on the schools. Deaf teachers who were once students challenged the existing barriers, students set higher expectations and demanded upgrading, and further education aside from Gallaudet became a reality for many students. [4]

While the focus was on deafness at both schools, and also on the traditional instruction of the curricula from that province, there was a successful transmission of sex-typed vocational options. Girls and boys were segregated in dorms and attended separate vocational classes geared to their presumed future roles according to gender. Deaf women were not able to access the information or education that might have helped them consider non-traditional options. Perhaps as a result of deafness or of isolation in a school, "deaf women are not making the same alterations in their judgments (that hearing women do) of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour for men and women."(Cook and Rossett, 1975: 344)

According to Canadian statistics (Statistics Canada, 1992; 1991 data) there are over 1,400 deaf people under age of 15 in Alberta and over 1,800 in the

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4. Interview with B. Palate, former teacher at Alberta School for the Deaf from 1956-1984, in Edmonton, 1990.

same age group in B.C. People over age of 15 who were hearing impaired in Alberta numbered almost 200,000 in 1991 but this included the aging population with less severe hearing losses. In B.C. over 270,000 people older than 15 reported having hearing impairments. Again, these statistics reflect an aging population.[5] Results from this most recent census were not available to show income and employment levels at this time. Older but still valuable data from the United States will be used to provide some understanding of the economic situation of the deaf.

Older 1974 census data, from the United States showed that less than 26% of deaf women finished grade nine in comparison with 31% of deaf men; in addition 10.7 % of deaf women get some amount of college education while 13.4% of deaf male students receive the same.(Schein and Delk, 1974: 53) There is no specific evidence to demonstrate that deaf men and deaf women had any greater differences between them than their hearing counterparts did. However, research did indicate that deaf women's vocational interests are more traditional than their hearing female peers.

> It is likely that a combination of ineffective vocational counselling and isolation from the contemporary world of work leads to fewer choices and the resulting lower remuneration and higher unemployment. (Cook and Rossett, 1975:341)

In 1987, Brown attempted to determine the predictors of income variance among deaf college students. This was an important assessment because many of the deaf students went to college expressly to improve their chances of securing good employment and better salaries. The study looked at many variables including family status, parental education and income as well as salient factors of deaf students' statuses. In his conclusions (Brown, 1987:28) suggested that sex is the most important predictor of variance in income. Even taking into consideration the graduates and non-graduates and higher degree recipients, deaf women earned less than deaf men across the board. This is indicative of the double jeopardy that deaf women

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5. Health and Activity Limitation Survey, 1991 Back-up Tables Provinces and Territories calculated by province and age groupings and disability but did not provide totals since aggregates were given as percentages of total population.

face in employment, even with higher education. Of course, higher education and even high school education is less available for deaf children than for hearing children, and thus complicates the situation for deaf women.

The academic programs at these schools for the deaf were not comparable with hearing schools although they claimed to be. Deaf students were only taught up to Grade nine.(Alberta, 1965) This meant the highest level a deaf student could expect to reach was the same level as a hearing student 4-5 years younger. No matriculation was offered until 1987. There was a controversy about the deaf schools failing to prepare students for further studies. Gallaudet College was the only program that would admit students and provide them with upgrading and support. The entrance exam was the only screening device and many students from Canada were turned away due to low academic performance. However, the Alberta Government seemed confident that the Ministry of Education was doing a job worthy of pride:

> Most graduates become self-dependent members of society obtaining gainful employment in areas such as agriculture, wood working, sheet metal, garment industry, printing and keypunch, all of which are very popular and suitable occupations. (Alberta, 1966: 72)

Not only are these all manual trades, but most of them are also primarily male dominated fields. Deaf women, as most women, were expected to study home economics while the men learned vocational skills. Certainly women can benefit from learning nutrition and clothing repair but it is less likely they will be employed in those areas compared to having a trade to pursue for men. Students' only woman-oriented occupations as options were seamstresses and typists, unless they wanted to get married or go on to college. (Grant,1986:53)

To determine what the students at the two schools in question held as vocational goals, their school yearbooks were investigated as a possible source of information. Student yearbooks in most high schools are published regularly by the students not the staff. This makes it a significant source of personal information written by the deaf and not about the deaf. The *Bulldog* from the Alberta School for the Deaf (ASD), and *View*

published by the students at Jericho Hill School for the Deaf (JHS) were compared for the year 1970.

Two male graduates of ASD hoped to attend Gallaudet, the college for deaf people in Washington, two more wanted to take courses at a technical institute in Edmonton, and two more men wanted to be commercial cooks. (Alberta School for the Deaf, 1970: 35-37) Two female graduates wanted to work in key punch, one in child care, another girl wanted to get married to a fellow student, and only one wanted to attend college. (Alberta School for the Deaf, 1970: 35-37). The only two male graduates from JHS also wanted to attend Gallaudet and the five female graduates all intended to go to Gallaudet although two of them already had part-time jobs as key punch operators. (Jericho Hill School for the Deaf, 1970: 10-12). In addition to the graduates, there were 11 male students who left without graduating and three female students did same. In 1970 the Government recognized the pressure to improve educational options to deaf students: "The expectations of parents of the deaf have risen just as the expectations of the parents of hearing children, resulting in increased questioning of existing methods of teaching. " (British Columbia, 1970:48)

It is also interesting to note that the deaf student who was editor of the 1970 *View* year book is now the Principal of the Alberta School for the Deaf. Joe Mclaughlin served as one of the initial informants for this research and admitted he never expected to reach his current position while a student at JHS. As an educator he is proud that so much progress has been made. Joe Mclaughlin emphasized that all courses and residences were now co-educational and that more and more deaf female students are pursuing occupational goals similar to male students. This is an interesting anecdote because this deaf man has a hearing sister who is also a teacher of the deaf and is the Principal of the McKay School for the Deaf in Montreal. An interesting question might be; would his sister have been so successful if she too were deaf? There are no deaf women administrators at any of the schools in Canada at this time.

To be fair, the Jericho program is also making progress in providing educational equity for female deaf students. There had been several accusations of sexual and physical abuse at the school which prompted

investigation and intervention. One of the approaches taken in dealing with the abuse issues was to provide education to all students about sexual harassment, abuse, legal rights and personal safety. Both schools are making efforts to reduce the barriers faced by deaf girls, as well as boys.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH FOCUS AND DESIGN

This research was intended to explore what deaf women think, believe and feel about gender roles and see how their hearing sisters differ or may be similar. Sisters were an important choice because the deaf women attended residential schools which means that although they came from the same family they had very different schooling and life experiences. Could attending a deaf school have made a considerable difference in attitudes toward gender? Did being deaf change one's experience and values? Might deafness or Deaf culture be so important that deaf women identify first with deaf people and only later with gender? It was not possible to exclusively focus on gender when deaf women participants felt so strongly about their deaf identities.

This research was an attempt at feminist and liberating "knowing" of the objects as subjects and actors. It also allowed the naming of the processes and social relations which result from and constrain the situation of deaf women. This work was looking both at how the women felt and why they thought they felt that way. The research was qualitative and an attempt at what Dorothy Smith (1987, Chapter 4) calls "institutional ethnography" (which is a structural analysis of the lived experiences -both subjective and objective - of social actors). The analysis is descriptive of the meaning systems for deaf women and their hearing sisters, and comparative in the perceptions of gender and deafness among the two groups. There will be no attempt to generalize about deaf women from this research; this study will analyze both their actions and answers in a structural way to place them in the social relations which affect them. The object is to learn about and compare the meaning systems of gender for hearing and deaf women.

The social relations which affect women in general are pervasive and strong and those which affect the deaf are specifically constructed to control the deviance of deaf people from so-called "hearing culture". Women are affected by sexism whether deaf or not and deaf women experience a type

of discrimination and stereotyping related to their being deaf much as women do for being female. Learning from Cheryl Malmo's work in interviewing and content analysis, there will be an "exploration of meaning as experienced directly by the subjects under investigation, and an analysis of the context in which that meaning is experienced. The method is dialectic in that the relationship between meaning and context will be explored." (Malmo, 1984: 20) All analyses must be informed by the lived experiences of women, both deaf and hearing who experience the social relations on a daily basis.

A. Data Collection and Analysis

The main source of data is interviews with deaf and their hearing sisters. Secondary sources of data include results from census questions and sociological texts about deaf people and about women. Interviews were used to get first-hand information on the perceptions of deaf and hearing women. This type of data collection is well suited to this research because it allows the mode of communication to be flexible and does not use normed tests or scales to rate responses. Although several possible options for measuring attitudes were considered (See Beere, 1990), there are no standardized tests which are normed for deaf women and it seemed less useful than developing a structured interview. Because the interview questions were pilot tested and developed after consultation with deaf women they reflect the views of deaf and hearing women and not simply pre-determined issues of interest to the researcher. The pilot test ensured that questions which gleaned more elaborate answers were included in the final interview process.

Further interviewing expanded on answers and developed themes which appeared in preliminary analysis. The interviews were semi-structured with questions allowing a variety of responses from open ended to yes and no type answers. The first interview was meant for information gathering and the open, general questions to allow time for the interviewer and the participants to develop a relationship and a communication mode that was comfortable for all involved. The second interview allowed for much more specific information and collaboration about the first session of data

gathering. The collection of this data was done over a period of two years, and in some individual interviews were conducted 6 months apart. Women who participated were also given the opportunity to write and correct transcripts of the interviews at a later date. Some women choose to add or delete comments and may have changed their ideas since the original interviews. Women participants' wishes were respected and only those comments which women have agreed to will be used in this report.

Since not all the women who participated were users of American Sign Language a professional interpreter was used to facilitate communication. With hearing sisters who did not sign a professional interpreter was used to translate the interview questions and answers. With deaf woman and one hearing sister who used ASL there was no interpreter present as the interview took place using sign language. All interviews were videotaped. This also enabled the transcription of the video-tapes to be made in English for those who did not use signing only. Transcripts were made in approximated English for signed interviews and in "verbatim" English for orally conducted interviews. Women who used sign language were given the opportunity to view their interviews and read transcripts in order to ensure accuracy in "translation." Women who did not use sign language generally did not watch the videotapes although these were made available on request to those who wanted copies. The questions for the interview were originally composed in English and are reproduced here, although they were not asked in English to the women who used sign language. American Sign Language version of the questions can be seen on the video-tape accompanying this dissertation.

The following questions were used in the first individual interviews on gender and deafness:

- What does "gender" mean to you? Do you have a sign for gender?
- Explain what do you think it is - what are gender roles?
- What do you like and dislike about being a woman?
- What do you like and dislike about being deaf/being hearing?
- Explain why you feel that way.
- How has your deafness affected your experiences of power?
- How has being female affected your experiences of power?

- How do you feel about the following statements?

Explain why you agree or disagree and how strongly you feel that way

  - **Boys are more aggressive than girls.**
  - **Hearing people are better drivers than deaf people.**
  - **Deaf people are more polite than hearing people.**
  - **Women are better caregivers of children than men are.**
  - **Single fathers should not raise children alone.**
  - **Women should have children before going to work.**
  - **Deaf schools are better for deaf children (better than mainstreaming).**
  - **Hearing students get a better education than deaf students.**

- Do deaf women identify more strongly with deaf culture than with women ?
- Do women experience discrimination because they are women - can you give me examples of sexism?
- What have been the strongest influences in your ideas about gender roles? About deafness?
- What role did your education (up to high school) play in forming your opinions? Can you remember what you felt at the time you were still in high school? How have you changed?
- Who were some of the main role models in your life? Why?
- What did you expect to learn from this research and what have you learned about yourself/gender/deafness/your sister?
- Have you changed your mind in any way about these issues?

The second interviews were used to ask focussed questions, verify previous information and to share information with all participants on the general research findings. Some of the themes which emerged in the first set of interviews included the mothering/parenting issue, working outside the home, feminine versus masculine characteristics and discrimination, particularly in the workplace. Although questions differed for each interview based on previous interviews the following questions were the basis of the second interview:

- •Explain how you feel about sexism- discrimination against women.
- •Explain how you feel about discrimination against deaf people.
- Which is worse, or which affects you more? Why do you think that?
- How do you feel about being both a woman and Deaf?
- Which is more important to you, positively or negatively, and why?
- How does being female and deaf affect the control you have in your life and how do you react to frustration when you don't get what you want? In particular, how do you cope with problems at work/home?
- Who were your role models? Are you a parent? If so, who do you copy or resemble more, your mother or father? Or another adult? How did you learn your basic parenting skills?
- Do you see similar characteristics between your parents and you? Why and why not?
- Are you interested in work outside the home? How do you feel about working outside the home, for other women, mothers, men, fathers?
- What is the difference between being a mother and a father?
- How do you feel about parenting, as a Deaf parent, or parent of Deaf child?
- Can you describe some characteristics that are masculine or feminine? What do these words mean to you? How would you explain them and do you have signs for them?
- Do you think there is a general understanding of gender in the Deaf community, even without having the signs?
- What are your comments about this research, gender, the process, and the goals? Suggestions?

Other data which was collected on written forms included education, occupation and age. Some of the women did not write down their income levels and so this factor was not included in final report. The occupations were sufficient indications of their status without trying to collect income levels from everyone.

Information requested on forms included : Current occupation, highest level of education, previous occupations and income levels as well as current level of income. Marital and family status, income and occupation of spouse if applicable, age, date of graduation or type of high school matriculation,

years in attendance at a school for the deaf, additional disabilities, including emotional, physical and mental illness which had impact on women, ethnic and racial origin, family and personal religion. (See form in APPENDIX A) In order to respect the confidentiality of participants the results of the demographic questions are not going to be paired with comments by women. The demographic information can be found in the APPENDIX B for reference. It was more important to the research to protect identities and gather personal views on issues than to link specific comments to background and characteristics assigned to marital status, occupation and other information provided on these forms.

Interview data was analyzed using two separate methods and at least two "modes". By modes I mean that part of the analysis was done in a manual/gestural language of signs and part was done in oral/written English. It was expected that there would be some incompatibility between modes but that some material would translate easily (such as demographic replies). These modes were determined by the language of the interview itself. For purposes of comparison, responses to specific statements were transcribed into English and were juxtaposed to enable better interpretation.

The process of interpretation and analysis began by reviewing the videotaped interviews for clarity and comprehension. When in doubt a professional interpreter was used to ensure accurate translation into English. After the spoken English responses and the signed responses had been coded they were presented to participants for validation. The transcripts were also used to develop further questions for the second interviews which provided clarification and expansion on issues raised in the first interviews. The transcription were edited to focus the analysis and the themes and domains were developed using the additional material from second interviews. The participants were given a final chance to edit, change or add to their comments, in writing and/or over the phone. In addition to reviewing the final transcripts, the original video-taped versions were reviewed for consistency and analysis. The combined and expanded themes were described and the patterns analyzed across groups and among each group of women. The synthesized analysis along with examples of phrases used in the interviews were written and finally

conclusions drawn. The final chapter will review the conclusions of the research.

In Chapter IV, on analysis of the data, several approaches will be discussed. A typology and thematic analysis will break down the categories expressed by the women so that ideas can be compared and contrasted (Babbie, 1989). The themes came from the deaf women and their hearing sisters, as well as the constructed questions used in the interview process. One reason that the entire contents of interviews could not be used is the incredible length and detail involved but the other reason was that most women felt some issues to be less important than others. Because of differences between research objectives and the expressed wishes of the participants, themes coming from their responses provided a focus for the analysis. The direct comparison between sisters was done primarily on the responses to statements designed to elicit strongly negative or positive reactions. Various topics overlapped and there was a great deal of information provided that was not analysed for this project, but which addressed many other issues. The themes selected for use were those reflecting gender role concepts and attitudes and issues relating to deaf culture or discrimination against the deaf. For example, the views of hearing sisters and deaf sisters were compared using the following themes.

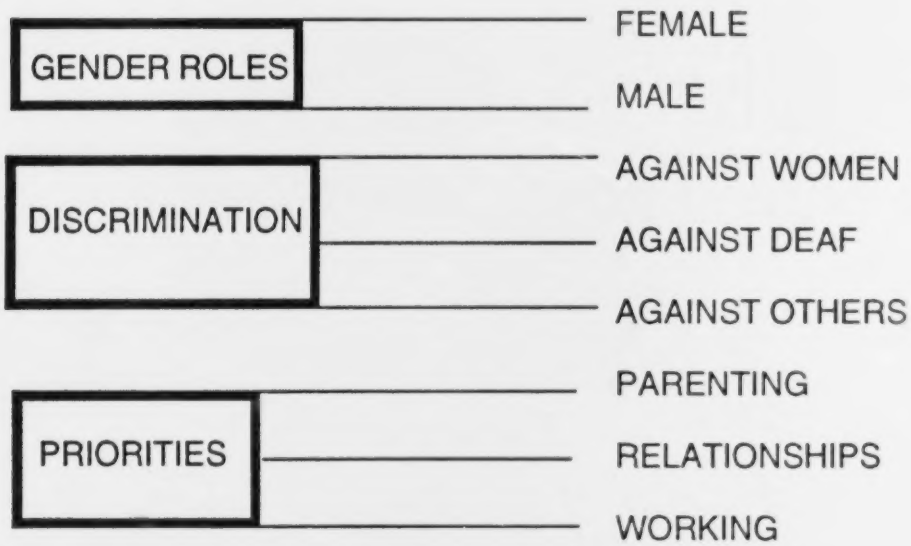

Figure 1. Themes Used for Contrast

Deaf women are compared to other deaf women, specifically those attending different schools, and deaf women are compared with their hearing sisters by pairs. This domain analysis includes such categories as: feminine or sexual experiences, working outside the home, mother/wife roles, relationships with other adults, sexism, discrimination based on deafness, deaf cultural membership, communication and language issues. Not all the women responded to all questions so some of the analysis is more heavily weighted where specific sisters spoke to certain issues more than others.

Secondly, a content (ethnographic) analysis was done on the interview material. For the deaf women this was done in sign language using video equipment and computer storage of ideas. For clarification, this process was done directly from stored videotaped recordings by the researcher's analysis with computer storage of conclusions and comments. After watching a short segment of once interview I would code comments and continue watching stopping frequently to code and review passages. It was not possible to accurately translate all the material for the purposes of using English language. For hearing women, the analysis was based on written English verbatim transcripts of their oral interviews (rather than on the sign language interpretation of these interviews).

There were charts drawn up using the final comments of women in this project. These charts are comparisons by sisters and are not in any particular order. In the case where questions were not answered or not available for specific participants other comments were used in place of that particular answer. The group of hearing women and the group of deaf women have had the opportunity to discuss their reports and were able to contribute to the editing and final analysis of the data. This dissertation is written in English but there will also be an supplemental video document. In order to provide access to Deaf participants and other interested community members this video document will summarize the findings and the report of the research. This video document will become part of the report and the participants will have access to both the written English and videotaped copy. In order to provide fluency in the videotape, a deaf professional sign teacher will be use American Sign Language on the videotape.

B. Informants

Eight pairs of sisters participated initially with a total number of 10 women completing the entire process. This took into account the fact that some women were not willing to compete both interviews and other women did not respond after the first interview to further questions. In other circumstances personal or family reasons were cited for leaving the project. Half of the women attended the Alberta School for Deaf in Edmonton and the other half the Jericho Hill School for the Deaf which is in Vancouver, B.C.. The hearing sisters are all within 10 years of age of their deaf sisters and will have attended various public schools in either province. These women were the primary informants through the process of personal interviews. Both sisters were given the choice of having the sister present during interviews or having it done privately. Only one sister allowed the other sister to be present and all others had their interviews alone. There are several hours of videotape for each sister, and all participants were able to view the videotape if they wished.

Of the informants used in the final data analysis, only two were not currently employed full-time. Several of the participants were professionals in an education field and one was a full-time student. Only two of the respondents did not have children. One woman was single, one widowed, one divorced and the rest were living with their partners. None of the women interviewed identified as being a member of a visible minority while two were immigrants to Canada. Only one of the women identified as having any disabilities other than being deaf. The women reported affiliation to religions as such as the Unitarian Church, Christianity, Catholic and agnostic.

Other informants included former and current teachers at both schools for the deaf. One teacher is also a former student of the Alberta School for the Deaf and one male teacher has taught there since 1958 but attended a different school for the deaf. Another informant is a teacher at one school but a graduate of the other. Several other informants from within the deaf community were used to provide insight into the residential school, the gender roles among the deaf community and the perspective of hearing persons related to deaf women. Some of the informants gave information

over the telephone using a Telephone Device for the Deaf, while others communicated in person using sign language. Where permission to cite the source was given in advance, the person will be identified. To protect the sources of information who did not explicitly give permission to be cited in the interview process, these comments will be footnoted without given names.

C. Language and Translation

One of the greatest challenges of this ethnographic research was the bi-modal nature of the interviewing process. For hearing sisters, except for one, an interpreter was used to translate between English and American Sign Language. The one sister who did not use an interpreter is herself a professional interpreter by occupation. In most cases of interpretation there are vocabulary and semantic difficulties which can result in both misinterpretation and vagueness but in this situation there was also a difficulty in recording responses. Most problems in translation and transcription also happen with English speaking participants, but these problems were more difficult when using a non-written language as the source language. Although every interview was videotaped there is considerable difference between transcribing the oral language on video tape into written English and translating and recording the signed expressions into English.

In the first case the gestures, intonation and facial expressions while important, are supplemental to not indicative of the intent and meaning of the verbalized response. For Deaf women or the sign language interpreter the facial expressions and gestures are not only part of the grammar and intent but also critical to the interpretation of meaning. Thus, the goal of the research, which was the description and analysis of the meaning of gender for deaf and hearing sisters, is compromised by the very process of documenting the interviews. Almost all of the text that quoted deaf women is a "representation" of their responses rather than an explicit translation. If translated, their words should appear in normal, formal English which may compromise the original intent. This is not to say that interpretation which would reflect the actual meaning of the deaf women's responses is not

possible. However, it may not, in this case, be desirable to translate/interpret completely into English. Yet, it is difficult to present the comments in signed form so that a reader could understand them. Although there are formally developed mechanisms for transcribing signed conversation, it would be both impractical and unnecessary to complete this process for the entire length of the interviews in question. For purposes of illustration, the following has been selected from a text on sign language interpretation to reveal the complexity and intensity of describing sign language in written English.

Spoken English: A lot of parents, young parents, use television as a babysitter.

Eng ↓↓
Interpretation : MANY MOTHER - FATHER YOUNG, FINE #TV ++,

ASL MOUTH Eng//↑ ASL MOUTH
TAKE-ADVANTAGE-OF BABY TAKE-CARE-OF

SO-TO-SPEAK (Davis, 1990:317)

For example, this would mean mouthing the "m" for the beginning of the sign for 'many', signing 'mother' and 'father' in succession for parents and using the qualifier 'young'; then signing "fine" hand shape and the fingerspelling of "T.V." repeated twice; following this the ASL mouthing which signifies "using" along with the middle finger passing over the left palm, then the sign for 'baby' with English mouth movements and lastly an ASL mouth movement for 'taking-care-of' with appropriate two handed sign quotation marks. Clearly this would be a useful system in analysing signed messages but not applicable for transcribing hours of interviews in this research.

After discussing the ability of American Sign Language to indicate person and number with verb agreement Padden also describes the problem of gender agreement. The reason this is termed a "problem" is for the purposes of both translating and understanding the intent of signed responses to questions involving gender. There are no specific signs used to indicate the gender of either persons, pronoun or verbs in American Sign Language. Padden explains further:

> In natural languages, verb agreement has three traditional categories; person, number, and gender. As the previous section demonstrates ASL marks person and number agreement, but does not mark gender. There are, however, other sign languages that do, for example, Taiwanese Sign Language. ... In their signs there are singular and plural, person agreement in first, second and third and gender is masculine, feminine and neuter. In the Serbo-Croation, the gender system can be analysed as made up of three "controller" genders' masculine, feminine and neuter, with two subgenders in the masculine, animate and inanimate. Subgenders are predictable morphological variations for the same gender class, usually for noun class such as animacy... Corbett's careful re-analysis of various gender systems points to the common confounding in oral languages between gender and noun class. (Padden, 1990: 127)

The linguistic significance of this phenomenon is not to be under-estimated but it is the question of methods which is being examined. For purposes of comparison, the samples of responses to set questions have been translated into English approximations of the signed responses. The hearing sisters who responded through an interpreter had their verbal responses transcribed intact, in English. Therefore, in comparing the responses it should be considered that one group of participants used English which is the same language as the record while the other source language was American Sign Language and the translation is only an "approximation" due to the distinction in modalities between oral and gestural languages.

In the comparison tables the spoken English transcriptions are written in a standard font Times plain, while the signed responses have be transcribed into approximations in English using the **Times Bold** to indicate the distinction. However, in the text and analysis deaf women's comments are identified and quoted in English regardless of the language of origin. This allows for ease of reading and comprehension by readers but does not represent exact equivalency for signed responses.[6]

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6. Two deaf researchers, Cundy (1988) and Mason (1989), also ended up writing their reports in English although interviews were done using sign language. Alternatives are not currently available, although it is obviously not a fair representation of the expressed meanings of Deaf women, it is

Two other important linguistic issues have to be addressed in order to understand the implications of translation and language on the methodology. First, in order to get both authentication and verification of responses from women participants, written English records were made of their interviews. Women were also given the opportunity to view the videos and review their responses. The fact that some of the women had better English skills may have influenced their choices in editing, adding or deleting references and transcribed comments from the record. In addition, this would hold equally true for the sisters who used spoken language. The ability to read, write and express themselves in English may have affected their choices in editing the written records. The difficulty in vocabulary, grammar and coherence was not indicative of expressive abilities among the participants but of the nature of interviewing and the formalized system of recording these interviews.

The second issue that was identified by an interpreter and also by one Deaf participant is the effect of transference or interference which occurs when a Deaf person or interpreter tries to adapt their signing to meet the language level of the other person in conversation. For example, a teacher will be signing a specific way to a deaf adult but might change their signing (as would a hearing adult) when talking to a deaf child. In this research the fact that as the researcher I did not use an interpreter when speaking with deaf women did not avoid the problem of interference or code switching as it is also known.

Because my signing is "influenced" by my English spoken and written vocabulary there is high possibility that the women who answered in sign language were skewing their signs further towards the English structure to meet my communication needs. This is most definitely true of the interpreters as I instructed them explicitly to fingerspell and mouth specific language choices so that I could follow what hearing women were saying exactly,

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necessary to report findings in a manner accessible to the "average" reader, which is generally a hearing, English fluent person. Video-taped document will supplement this English text to ensure better access for Deaf persons wishing to review this research.

rather than choosing to use American Sign Language without the English markers. The situation is more clearly explained in the following;

> The results of intensive contact between two structurally different languages like ASL and English is extremely complex and points to a need for modification of the terms traditionally used to characterize language contact phenomena.... the use of English mouthing and ASL, code mixing appears to be highly rule governed. Since both native ASL interpreters in this study produce mouthing in similar ways the use of mouthing seems patterned. The degree to which there is interlingual transference during English to ASL interpretation appears to be determined by the participants, topic and setting. (Davis, 1990:319)

Due to the dominance of my English language, many of my sentences or phrases were signed in a mixed code that is neither pure ASL nor pure English. This allowed me to maintain some of the English that was prepared in written questions and used with hearing women as well as to adapt the vocabulary and grammar for the needs of Deaf women. The use of English text for ASL expressions has been quite common among researchers. Deaf researcher David Mason, in his doctoral dissertation about bilingualism and biculturalism chose to use English in his "protocols" or transcripts (Mason, 1990). Then Mason would paraphrased the statements and categorized these comments into clusters of themes. One participant remembered her early communication with her sister; "With my sister, we were very close' we could converse normally with our home-made sign language in addition to our speech" (Mason, 1990: 73).

One of the statements he made which has relevance to the current research topic also reveals how he interpreted comments of a participant. "Rosa's lasting memories and attitude toward her siblings showed she wanted access to her family." (Mason, 1990:73) This is another example of how a Deaf researcher can use both English and ASL to interpret meaning in responses. In describing his own method of phenomenological investigation Mason (1990: 30) commented on the nature of this unique research issue.

> The context in which bilingualism encompasses the co-constitutionality of the language and the culture may be difficult to study scientifically. It has so many possible

> variables that a research methodology must be flexible enough to include them but systematic enough to allow reliable data collection and analysis. Exploration of the unknown realms of the phenomenon must not be limited by preconceptualized hypotheses and procedural restrictions.

In order to discuss the language use in this project there must be some consideration given to validity and reliability. Not only must the research be investigating what it intends to but the nature and meaning of the question must fit with the approach and method used for the investigation. Most of the language used in this project was open to checks on reliability by the video-taping and transcription of interviews along with a professional interpreter being used during the research process.

D. Validity and Reliability

Two commonly recognized types of validity checks were used in this research. Face validity and internal validity were built into the design of the inquiry. There is often a difficulty with the use of subjective or qualitative data but since the object of the study was indeed to get at the attitudes and opinions of the women participants this is not seen as a major concern. There is "inconsistency, variability and relativity of human perception" (Osborne, 1989:26) present in all data. For the internal validity of the research there was agreement among participants about the content of the interviews. Two professional interpreters, one who was part of the interview and another who was not, were able to collaborate on the interpretation.

A hearing research assistant was able to listen to the verbal responses and transcribe them word for word and both the transcribed and approximated records were then passed on to the participants for verification. Questions were asked to elaborate on shorter answers and most women were asked questions twice, once during the first interview and again in the second and were encouraged to identify and/or explain discrepancies. All women were given the option of deleting, adding or editing the records. This was done not only to give opportunity for protecting privacy but also to ensure that the women felt empowered by the research and that they had some control over

what was going to be used in the final report. To look at face value and triangulate the research results with other studies will assist in supporting any findings, although generalizations from the interviews are not being proposed. Initially, the literature review indicated a dearth of material in the area of deaf women but the small amount available pointed towards strong ties with Deaf culture rather than with other women. Research about minority cultures and about women and bilingualism also demonstrate that there is a duality within gender identity and minority status that is also illustrated by the responses to the interview questions. In some recent survey research deaf youth at the Model Secondary School for the Deaf indicated they associated more with being Black than being deaf because "the first thing you see is that I am Black, deaf comes later" (Anderson and Grace, 1991: 74). Yet for deaf women who are not Black, the deafness seems to be paramount.

Osborne (1989:28) suggests that "the final check on the validity of the interpreted structure of the phenomenon depends upon the extent to which that structure resonates with the experiences of other people, not in the study, who have experienced the phenomenon." The women in this research were only samples of what other deaf and hearing women might be like. Although no generalizations will be made from their comments, the more recently exposed problems with literacy, education and employment status of people who are deaf give credence to the concerns surrounding the discrimination experienced by deaf women participants.[7] I should hope that by this time there would be no need for more than face validity in the issue of sexism.

Part of reliability is the level of similarity in retelling or the confidence of the participant describing the experience. Reliability is a concern only where there is apparent contradiction, confusion or conflict. Often the women interviewed paused, questioned themselves or the question and had to think before answering. This in itself will be discussed as part of the findings, but

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7. See thesis by Roger Carver for extensive review of the literacy problem, see Harlan Lane (ed) *The Deaf Experience* for international documentation on education and sign language, also see thesis by Tanis Doe for economic marginalization analysis and further discussion of the status of the deaf.

in general all women must have had direct experience with both the language and the topic in question in order to reliably answer. This should be considered when looking at hearing sisters perceptions about deafness and when considering deaf sisters perceptions about being hearing. Differences in attitude and beliefs may not be correlated to the hearing status but rather to experience or lack thereof. This research was intended as a way to describe some of the attitudes and ideas held by deaf women and their hearing sisters as they relate to both gender and deafness.

In this research questions were asked more than once and in different ways to ensure that if comprehension was a problem or if memory was causing difficulty in responding that women had a second or third chance to reply. In all but three cases women took the opportunity to review and revise their statements and made corrections or revisions to previously unclear comments. For example, when one sister stated that she was a "feminist" and her next statement was that she enjoyed being treated with extra special care because she was a woman, the sister in question changed the word feminist to "feminine" and stated that she was actually not a feminist but that she had intended all along to mean feminine. All sisters were asked to respond to some statements which were purposely set up to reveal strong or moderate feelings about controversial issues. Within the same set of questions there were generalizations about deaf people and hearing people and men and women. Some of the comments of participants later in the interview, or in other cases earlier comments were triangulated with these statements as a reliability check. There was also an anticipation of change or growth during the research period. Women were invited to describe any changes since the previous interview or overall if relevant to the research. Although some of the women had interviews within relatively short periods of time others had up to 6 months[8] between first and second which allowed for considerable changes in attitude and experience.

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8. Due to illness and geographic distance, some of the interviews were spaced with several months in between while others were held within two months of each other. In one situation there was only one full-length interview with the validation taking part by electronic mail, written documents and phone.

E. Confidentiality and Anonymity

One of the more difficult problems with the research methodology was ensuring privacy and anonymity for participants. This type of targetted research is by definition not random and all participants had to be informed of the intent and purpose of the research. There was no way to provide for anonymity between the researcher and the participants but after completing the interviews all information was coded so that outside readers should not be able to identify individuals. One way to reach community members was to advertise in publications and to contact organizations for names of potential participants. Out of 14 deaf women who were initially selected only 7 deaf women were actually interviewed. In order for women to be selected they had to meet specific criteria. The deaf women had to have attended a school for the deaf for at least 10 years (most of their school years). They had to have a living, hearing sister. They had to reside in either British Columbia or Alberta, and finally the deaf woman and her sister had to be willing to participate in the interviews and followup communication. These restrictions made the pool of potential women very small. Due to the low incidence of profound hearing loss and to the closeness of the deaf community, identity of women participants could feasibly be determined by connecting various statements and facts.

Because many of the women in this research went to the same schools and the deaf community as adults has easy access to school records the demographic data has been coded and no identifying information has been given. Throughout the analysis direct identifying information has been avoided and quotations are only used when they do not implicate a specific person or incident. For purposes of confidentiality, many of the pairs of answers for these charts of comparison have been presented in mixed order. This has been done to protect women participants from identification by other community members. Otherwise, by making sisters' comments easily attributable some of the information gathered in the research might not have been as freely given.

In several circumstances women have voluntarily agreed to have specific quotations used and have acknowledged some risk to themselves.

Generally the method used to protect confidentiality was the restricted access to any of the data, demographics and interview transcriptions. Only the women participants and the professional interpreters had access to these data. Care was taken during the final revisions and analysis to ensure that no harm should come to participants as a result of their involvement in this research. One of the important aspects of protection from harm is the fact I am also a member of the community that the women have come from. We will see each other in community activities and will need to maintain social contact for various reasons. There is some danger in having the researcher and the participants have contact before, during and after the research because of the risk of sharing private information or influencing responses. However, Kirby and McKenna (1989:105) suggest that the approach taken was indeed an effective one.

> Researching from the margins is best accomplished by those who live on the margins. The simple reason is that , in speaking from the margins, convincing testimony comes best from those who live in it. Also, because they experience the world differently they have a better sense of what research questions need to be addressed.

As a deaf woman, and a parent of a deaf child, and as a role model to other deaf people, I have status within this community that helped me gain the confidence of the participants. It is on their trust that I proceeded with every effort to ensure no harm would come as a result of their participation in this project. Indeed, it is part of the research objectives that all participants would benefit from the experience.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH DATA

The themes developed came from deaf and hearing participants during interviews. Some of the themes became more structured after questions were chosen for the second interview by the researcher. Categories will be presented and narratives provided to describe the themes throughout this section. Although the analysis will present comparisons and descriptions of meanings under various categories, it is important to know where the themes came from originally.

Themes developed out of deaf women's comments in order of prevalence include:

- deaf identity
- discrimination against deaf people
- parenting and relationships with adults
- general gender roles
- sexism in career choices
- working outside the home.

Themes developed out of the comments from hearing sisters in order of prevalence include:

- male-female gender roles
- working outside the home
- relationships within the home/family
- sexism, particularly violence against women
- deaf education and culture.

Stereotypes which were developed by the researcher and explored with both sisters and which are compared using tables between sisters include:

- gender stereotypes around aggression, caregiving, single fathers and working mothers.
- stereotypes about deaf and hearing people relating to education, driving, and politeness.

A. Themes and Analysis

The first three themes to be explored will be identity, gender roles and discrimination. The fourth theme will be explored in terms of the issues most frequently raised by the participants. "Priorities" is not as much a theme as a category that emerged from analysis of the interviews. These domains will be explored using examples of comments as well as narrative about the women's responses.

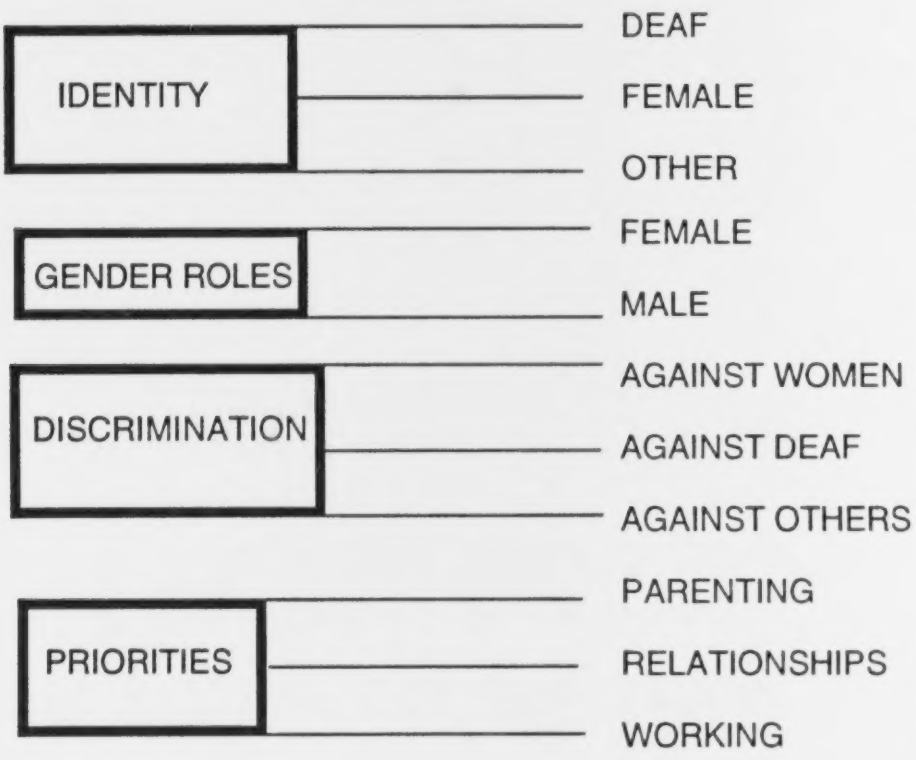

Figure 2. Thematic Categories

1. IDENTITY : BEING FEMALE - BEING DEAF - BEING HUMAN

One of the first sets of questions asked of women was about being deaf and being female, or conversely being hearing and female. Almost all the hearing women found it difficult to respond to the question about being hearing. Without exception they identified more strongly with their gender than with their ability to hear. However, three of the sisters made it clear that they recognized and valued their ability to hear, and compared it to their sisters. All of the deaf women who replied were able to identify with deafness or Deaf culture more easily than their sisters could with being hearing. For the Deaf women it was central to their lives and for the hearing sisters it was only relevant in comparison to their sisters.

> I value hearing, I love music and I know what it means to me because my sister and brothers are deaf;
>
> I enjoy music and my hearing friends, hearing my children's voices, and just being able to communicate without problems, and I know my sister can't;
>
> I love being hearing, there is nothing bad about being hearing at all, I have sometimes wished I could make my sister hear, I know it is harder for her because she is deaf;
>
> I find music is very emotional, helps bring me up when I am down, its very important to me.

One hearing sister suggested that for deaf women their ability to identify would depend on her ability to communicate with non-deaf women;

> Referring to people who are profoundly deaf like my sister I would have to say that where there is little communication there is little identification. The more you can communicate with a group or a culture, the more you would identify with it!

For the deaf women who answered there were three major reasons given for identifying with deaf culture: **similarity, understanding, and communication**. Communication seems to be the most visible reason for identifying with other deaf people. Using a shared language to

communicate, and in particular a minority one is very important to deaf women. "Communication is most important", "deaf people use sign language, much easier to communicate " and " Of course deaf people first because of language barrier to hearing people" were among the answers given for identifying with deaf culture. None of the women interviewed actually said they "liked" being deaf but all except one felt "proud" of being deaf and had confidence in herself as a deaf person.

In the interviews the women did indicate that it is more than just sign language or communication that is important. When asked about hearing women who sign or interpreters, the women still favoured identifying and socializing with "Deaf" people over hearing women or men. The signs "same as me" or "similar/standard" were used to describe that deaf women felt connected to other deaf people through a shared characteristic, "being deaf is like one big family";"deaf culture is like a second family"; and "we are like brothers and sisters and support each other, together".

It was also mentioned that deaf women understand each other. Being deaf was not seen as a positive thing by the women but being with other deaf people was. All the women interviewed preferred to be in the company of deaf people and in particular favoured education with deaf people. They said that there was a sense that the deaf people understood them, shared experiences and could relate in ways that hearing people could not. This was expressed in three cases and one woman replied " I cannot explain it but I feel connected and understood when I am with Deaf, feel relaxed, at home, just better than hearing". Although this woman may not have felt she could explain it, she certainly made it clear that she was more comfortable with other deaf people.

But one participant also felt she was "proud of being a woman, giving birth to a child" and was comfortable with hearing women. This woman stated that her identification with women was partly for respect "As deaf I am not accepted, but as a woman I get more respect, I enjoy that."

Although this research specifically asked women who were deaf about their identification, it has been demonstrated that many deaf people feel this

sense of membership in the deaf community. Membership in the deaf community is primarily by association. By attending the same schools and sharing a language, a community develops, but membership can also be a choice. To join the deaf community often means accepting the stigma of being different, yet finding others who are alike. Many deaf people depend on this sense of belonging.

> With deaf communities, members seldom face the difficulties and frustrations which arise when they navigate through the hearing world. A sense of belonging and wholeness is achieved which is not found among the hearing. Among fellow members there is no shame in being deaf, and being deaf does not mean being odd or different. (Higgins, 1980:76)

There was a clear difference between hearing sisters and deaf sisters on this theme. As expected there was a strong tendency for hearing sisters to primarily identify with being a woman while the deaf women identified almost exclusively with being deaf. However, a third domain also emerged from the interviews. One hearing woman and one deaf woman (not sisters) identified with being human, or people more than being deaf or being hearing or female. Although the deaf woman in this case did initially say she would identify with deaf culture she also stated that she was first and foremost a human being but if asked to choose between being female and being deaf her own identification would be with being deaf, and she also felt strongly that other women would think this too.

"I see myself as human, as a person, not as a woman." The other woman, not the sister of this deaf woman, also felt she identified with being a woman more than being "hearing" but if given the option felt she was more a person than a woman. She also stated that there are many other categories to belong to. "I could call myself many things, but I am really a person first." This woman also indicated that she felt being a woman was more relevant to her than her being hearing, but that she would assume that her deaf sister might feel that being deaf was important. Most hearing women acknowledged this possibility.

2. GENDER ROLES - MALE AND FEMALE or...

> "In common usage, a person's gender is often characterized as either "feminine" or "masculine", although what is meant by these terms varies from author to author. The claim that a person is either "feminine" or "masculine" is often tantamount to a claim that the person exhibits certain psychological traits." (Vetterling-Braggin, 1982: 6)

Describing someone in terms of gender is possible but gender is also used "prescriptively" to determine how men and women "should" act. There are examples of women's perceptions of both prescriptive and descriptive gender roles taken from the interviews. Before asking about male and female roles all the participants were asked about the concept of gender itself.

In order to assess the awareness about gender all interviews began by asking what gender meant to the participants. None of the deaf participants knew of a formalized sign for "gender" although three suggestions were offered in the course of the interviews. The "g" hand shape at the mouth and head (male/female spacial locations) was one, signing man-theirs/woman-theirs was a second, and the third used a sign which means "tending towards" commonly referred to as "pa" with the associated male or female sign. These could easily be used in context to interpret the ideas of gender traits, roles or sex. Because there was no standard sign used I fingerspelled the word gender and asked the interpreters to do the same. Some of the answers for the meaning of gender/ gender roles from deaf women included: "Don't know... (shrugging) not sure", "sex is more related to physical differences like anatomy but there is an overlap in gender, and it is roles like behaviour..","men have penises and women have breasts and vaginas, men have more muscles, those biological differences" ,"men here and women women there (pointing to left and right), each different and separate" .

The same question asked to hearing women got the following responses (in English): "Male and female roles, that is what gender means", "It didn't mean anything until I got the letter you sent", "I have no idea" , "it could mean individual opinion or cultural or religions point of view. There are thousands

of ways that anyone could feel about what they "should" be", "my first idea was male and female period. But I read more and now I know it is related to ways of acting, values and not just sex, but it is a new idea for me to analyze it, now it includes what men and women tend to do up til now (traditionally)" "physical differences of groups of men and women. But I think that gender roles are getting mixed now. They aren't very clear, the roles aren't as separate as they once were."

For purposes of comparison, it was not clear if the deaf women explained less about the term gender because there was no "sign" for it or because they were unfamiliar with the semantics involved. An example of this is the description of gender which when translated appears vague: " men here and women there (pointing to the left and right), each different and separate". In American Sign Language, with the grammar and facial expression it could have been interpreted to mean a) male and female are distinct and separate both physically and behaviourally or b) men should stay in their roles and women should stay in their roles, which are different roles. Both translations could be considered accurate depending on the context in the rest of the conversation, but the language chosen is loaded with meanings of prescription, description and connotations. In the interviews the deaf women expressed themselves well using sign language, although their ability to respond seemed far greater on issues of deafness. Their responses to gender questions may reflect a linguistic difficulty in translation more than a perception difficulty.

In any case, generally both deaf and hearing sisters knew that gender roles related to male and female differences but were less clear on what about the kind and quality of those differences. The hearing women were more prescriptive in their explanations while deaf women seemed to describe what differences they saw as gender based. It was also evident that deaf women and hearing women did not see all issues as strictly divided by gender. More than once the women questioned this division by either not answering or suggesting it was a matter of "individuality" or other factors (culture or ability).

Roles attributed to Women and Men:

> I guess the top gender role for women is childbearing, that is physically. In my life there is not a great distinction because I have an equal partnership with my husband to be. I think its hard to describe what are specifically male or female roles, they are so mixed.

This was stated by one of the hearing sisters. Another hearing sister felt that caregiving, or child-rearing was a woman's role. Two of the hearing sisters described physical differences in roles, such as being smaller, better looking and more likely to be weak than men. Some of the comments by hearing sisters included:

> The roles were more defined by physical being male or female. The men did the physical labour and the make up of a man is, umm, his muscles are stronger, larger genetically than women, more capable of hard word. With emphasis on equality in intelligence and their capability (women's), there is a lot of pressure now for women to be equal in society. I think there is more and more emphasis on women sharing the men's role in terms of business and education, also an emphasis on men sharing the pleasures of the woman's role, taking care of the children, cooking, allowing themselves to have a more sensitive side.

> There are biological traits such as reproduction, things like that But number one women tend to be more nurturing, ... and more guilty.

> An example of one perspective of gender roles would be when I worked at a bank and East Indians would come in and females are not allowed to talk to commoners, we were women working there so we were commoners. That's their life, the female always three steps behind . The males are superior. And the women 2nd in line. My opinion is that we both are equal, we have the same roles if we have the same skills, same education, knowledge. When I went to work my husband stayed home and raised my daughter then I came home and he went to work at night when he was at work I became housewife. We both had same roles at different times of the day.

> I guess I would think of personal intimacy as feminine - friendships... I guess I live around people who are not really feminine or masculine, they are all well, seem to be human. I think my father was a traditional man, so I would think of those silly things that my father carried on about being a man, tough.. abrasive, unyielding, which I have negative feelings about because,.... they were negative.
>
> It is still the traditional role for men to be the "provider" and they have to earn money, HAVE TO, so relating to work I would think they have less control because I can say no, I don't want to work at 7 AM because I have the kids to take care of but my husband or my partner can't say that. Men don't have that choice, he has to accept the work. I have more control, or flexibility in my priorities because of that.

Most of the comments contrasted male-female roles such as working for pay and unpaid working the home as "gender" issues. Deaf women were both descriptive and prescriptive in roles.

> Usually men go to work and support their children, men do sports and usually women can be housewives, or if they cant, they go to work. Women look after the children and take care of the house, cleaning and cooking
>
> Like walking lightly, that is more feminine, and being hairy is more masculine. For clothes, if you like it and it is comfortable, wear it, It doesn't matter who its for. Depending on situation, masculine could be like not showing emotion•"Masculine is tough relating to bodies, and feminine is wearing make-up, being fussy about clothes, looking attractive, those are my meanings.

One deaf participant was asked what masculine and feminine meant and answered:

> Muscles are associated with men and of course anatomical differences, and women are more tender, their clothes are different, we could pick our feminine or masculine clothes, but where do you draw the line? I would not say that a woman who is dressed like a man is masculine but I might call her a butch.

Another one said:

> Boys behaviour is more rough, they have bigger bodies, women are more feminine, girls and boys have differences inside their bodies so that is related to how they behave differently.

Deaf women also pointed to physical differences; "men have more muscles of course and they can be taller and stronger than women" and suggested that they were more suited to doing heavy work than caring for children.

Because so many of the women brought up parenting and in particular mothering issues, an entire section will focus on this domain under the category "priorities". In order to look at the issue of parenting in perspective it is being compared with working and relationship issues. Not all women were in relationships nor were all women mothers so this is an important comparison. For example, the deaf woman who suggested that some men were better suited to working in business while women are better caregivers and working with children is a professionally employed person without children. Gender roles may not seem to be easily expressed on the conscious level by the deaf women, as evident by some of their pauses or reluctance to answer but they clearly have established belief systems of what men and women do, or should do, in various circumstances .

One of the questions asked of both deaf and hearing woman was to relate stories or experiences of their high school years. Several of these questions related to gender issues such as division of school work or chores, career goals and treatment by teachers and staff. Although some hearing sisters could relate stories of preferential treatment for male students most of the sisters did not put their experiences into a gender perspective. However, the deaf women were far more hesitant to give answers to these questions and overall did not seem to want to, or be able to, put their school experiences into gender contexts. Some personal explanations for this included not being able to remember and the issues not being important. As a researcher it is my observation that many deaf people cannot explain issues unless they have a language to express that experience in and during school years these students learned in an oral-only environment which could make expressions using sign language more difficult. It is however,

possible that memories have been repressed or suppressed because of physical and/emotional violence during childhood, or other traumatic experiences at the schools. Two other suggestions can be considered as reasons for this apparent lack of gender expression; the first is that until one has a gender consciousness it is highly unlikely that one can go back and put other experiences into this context, and perhaps the deaf women interviewed do not yet have such a consciousness. The second reason is the one most often suggested by the women in this research which is it is of little important to them so they do not think about it. This is possible either by itself or in combination with language or memory problems, but is also the most cited reason for not having answers to questions about gender in high school. Deaf women did not feel it was or even is important and so do not have ideas about gender, although they have many ideas about deafness.

3. Discrimination Against .... People

One clear conclusion this research points to is the desire to be de-pathologized and de-categorized. Both hearing and deaf women made it clear that they did not necessarily put men and women, hearing and deaf or any other groups of people into specific categories based solely on their characteristics. Most of the women who were interviewed felt that they as individuals treated other people with respect and deserved the same. This category is important to examine because of its relationship to gender roles. In particular the concept that restrictive gender roles constitute discrimination and that various structural conditions impose limitations on women, and deaf people based on prescriptive standards or expectations.

The interesting consideration in this domain is that all the deaf women felt that being deaf was their primary reason for being discriminated against, and that even though they were women, their experiences were mainly the result of being deaf. Hearing women also commented that deafness was a far greater "handicap" than being female and being female was not a negative thing. They did feel that there are many negative things done to women regardless of their hearing loss. The three categories for discrimination included, discrimination against deaf people, against women, and against other minority groups.

The most commonly cited type of discrimination against deaf people was in employment. The discrimination against women included sexism, employment discrimination, violence and pornography. Discrimination against other groups included exclusion, violence and employment discrimination as well. While most of the deaf women focussed on the problems of getting jobs, being promoted and getting training, the issue of accessibility was also raised. The very specific problem of not having captioned television was raised more than once as a form of discrimination. None of the hearing women mentioned this as a problem although two of the hearing women mentioned the lack of interpreters in colleges, poor employment options and generalized ignorance about deafness as factors in discrimination against deaf people.

Although several questions relating to power were asked in both primary and secondary interviews, most women did not answer these questions directly. However, through the interviews instances of power imbalances and experiences of loss of power were brought up by both hearing and deaf sisters. The section on priorities explores in more detail examples of how the women saw their own experiences of power in the home and in society, but clearly discrimination was one illustration of power differentials for women and deaf people.

In the interviews the deaf women did not mention violence against women as a significant problem but the issue of wife assault and abuse in deaf schools was raised as a concern. The issues of safety and pornography were raised by hearing women more than once and were seen to be "women's" issue rather than deaf issues. The following excerpts are illustrative of the variety of comments. A figure designed to demonstrate the differences between hearing and deaf women's comments, as well as to describe the typologies of discrimination identified is presented following these comments. There were lengthy comments on this topic but only some are represented here for the purposes of illustration.

Hearing woman who was asked if women experience sexism, or discrimination because they are women answered:

> I think that with discrimination, each person has things about them which cause them to feel discriminated against. Each of us has our own disabilities. Most people are handicapped between their ears. What they think is more of a disability than what they say or do. That is generalizing, and some people's handicaps are far more severe than others. In certain situations, YES women are discriminated against but men are discriminated against in other situations, so are children. Races, religions, and other groups too. So, yes women are discriminated against because they are women.

One of the hearing women who is a student commented :

> I was an inspector and was administering contracts. When I had problems on the job site it usually turned out that other people had problems with that same person too. I am feeling the effects of discrimination at school more acutely because I do not have any status as a student. At work I was acknowledged and paid for my skills.

Speaking as a woman in engineering she added:

> There is discrimination based on being a woman and a woman in this field. At school, there are male students young men who don't want to see older women as their peers and it obviously bothers them for me to be there.

Another woman responded with frustration but also pointed out the impact of discrimination on women not in the workplace.

> (hands up) well, that's the way the system is set up, who is the strongest group? men, middle class too, I guess, oh and hearing right, so women , up until now looking back to my mothers age, or her time she was expected to stay home, not worth anything she never earned an income and the government wouldn't give her a pension when she retired- like retiring from being a homemaker. So I think that generally society treats or looks at women as inferior same as other minorities.
>
> Some women experience discrimination, probably, I know, not myself but when women try to enter the workforce in male dominated roles it is slowly starting to change that women can do those jobs. I have not

> experienced that but my friends have, and I have seen it on TV or in movies.
> When I look at the world I know that women experience sexism, women aren't able to get promoted in jobs when men can get those jobs, in attitudes, being alone on the streets, many... but number one for me is not being safe on the streets, that's the worst one. If I go with a group of friends that's fine but it really bothers me that I can't take a walk to my friends house a few blocks.

When asked if there was a difference between sexism and discrimination against deaf people one hearing woman answered:

> No, Not much difference. I think they are really similar, like all minority groups, Native people, deaf , disabled all have many things that are similar in the way society looks at them.

Another similar answer was:

> There are too many kinds of discrimination so I don't think about it as only sexism. I think in terms of family, like in the family unit there is discrimination related to the family. When I think about women, or mothers, having children changes women from being wives into mothers, and it is different from just being a female person. I don't remember anything that really hurt me or made me loose something that I blamed on discrimination. Maybe I have but it wasn't severe enough to remember.

This comment was also combined with a discussion about equality in the workplace. The same sister made another statement about discrimination in employment which is more related to perceived biological differences.

> I think men and women should get equal pay for equal work. However, I also believe that physically (most) men and women are not equal and because of this, sometimes a woman cannot do as good a job as a man (and vice versa). As far as sexism - as long as we have hormones I believe it will exist!

When asked about the power differential between men and women, a hearing sister answered

> Being female does not affect my power' with women and men a great deal depends on individual differences and situations. Sometimes you just have to work harder, I don't think I have less power.

The following excerpts came from deaf women's conversations about discrimination against women, even though they talk more about deafness, the topic was sexism. Do women experience discrimination because they are women?

> Good example, for deaf or hearing jobs, men can get high level jobs and women stay lower, but women can do same job. Women can be president but they are denied (rejected) because of discrimination. Women could be president, why not? Men don't permit it. That is discrimination.

> Deaf men and hearing men can be paid good jobs but mostly women get lower paid jobs and stay home. Hearing women can be nurses but deaf women have trouble being nurses. Deaf women can be teachers and that helps have influence on deaf education. But deaf men can't be the manager because they are discriminated against being deaf.

A deaf woman responded to the question about discrimination against women with this answer:

> In jobs, yes. I was frustrated for a year I could not get a job. I have high level skills in data entry and computers and I sent my good resume to many people but there are no openings, they told me. pause I don't know if there is difference between men and women, depends on experience. But I had experience and they would not hire me, I am deaf.

> Being deaf is worse for jobs, even being a deaf man is only a little better than deaf woman, because deaf man could do men's work. If hearing, a woman can get better job opportunities. Almost anything can be done by people who can hear. There is a big difference between deaf women and hearing women. I realize that when I go to work there is less power. Makes me feel low, jealous that I can't get acting supervisor's jobs. Others with less experience get it. Being deaf is worse at work, but at home not a problem.

Another deaf woman challenged the question about sexism in this way:

> Discrimination against women ? Which women, women who are deaf or hearing? Deaf is still more discrimination because hearing men are still in control and still discriminate because of being female but also discriminate against deaf. Look at myself. I see myself first as a person, I don't think I have been told no because I am a woman. It's mostly being deaf.

Asked to share an example of discrimination against women, in the deaf community, one woman signed this response (translation misses emphasis):

> I have been treated differently by a deaf man because I was a woman. He was helping me pack and move and I am an independent type so I told him I could carry out a box. He said no no it is too heavy and you are a woman. I picked it up easily and he was embarrassed! HA HA.

Another woman added that she would be fine if she was hearing, and female:

> In jobs there is discrimination against women but more against deaf. I see hearing women in my office doing fine, if I was hearing and still a woman it would be much better.

There was mention of problems in relationships where deaf women separated or left their husbands. One woman specifically felt that her relationship was abusive and related to being deaf. She felt trapped by the situation of not being able to communicate with others. One other mention of the abuse issue in deaf schools was raised but generally the deaf participants did not mention the issue of safety and violence very often. The focus was on employment issues as they relate to both women and deaf people.

Because there was so much interest in the area of employment an entire section will focus on work outside the home, but this particular domain was related to sexism. Deaf women related to sexism mainly as a corollary to discrimination against them as deaf people, in particular in the work place.

Most of the hearing sisters could understand the similarities or overlaps between gender based and deafness based discrimination.

The hearing sister who felt she did not have less power as a woman, also described a situation where she was refused a bank loan unless her husband co-signed. She said "if I was not a woman I think the bank would have given me the loan. If I had been deaf they would have probably asked for a co-signer. I don't think they would give the loan to a single deaf person." One interpretation of this is that the term "discrimination" is loaded with "employment equity" connotations. There was a considerable difference between hearing and deaf women's responses to this issue.

One of the difficulties in getting women to respond to questions about "power" is that this is not a term used in every day language to describe experiences. It is a sociologist's term to name experiences and ability to influence but it is meaningless without a context. The hearing women brought up examples of sexism, the use of pornography and relationships to describe how they left as women but the deaf women had more difficulty relating their experiences of power "as women". Most of the deaf women could clearly relate stories of discrimination based on deafness and were clearly more concerned with discrimination against deaf people than against women. This is not to say deaf women did not see women being discriminated against (hearing or deaf) but that for them gender was not central to the power issue. Deaf women did not see a major power differential within the deaf community either, since it was like a "family". But even families have inequities of power and this was reflected in other responses when discussing issues such as driving, parenting, and working. Although the questions which asked directly about power did not elicit as many responses as expected other questions and other responses provided enough discussion on examples of power imbalances to illustrate the women's experiences of power, conscious or not.

FIGURE 3. Typology of Discrimination

TABLE 1 : Frequency of Comments by Sisters

	Discrimination Against							
Type of Discrimination	DEAF		WOMEN		OTHER		TOTALS	
mentioned by	Deaf	Hearing	Deaf	Hearing	Deaf	Hearing	Deaf	Hearing
EMPLOYMENT	5	3	4	5	1	3	10	11
not being hired	3	2	2	5	0	2	5	9
not being promoted	3	2	1	4	0	0	4	6
not being respected	4	2	1	4	0	2	5	8
SEXISM	1	1	3	5	0	0	4	6
INACCESSIBILITY	3	2	0	1	0	0	3	3
VIOLENCE	1	1	1	3	0	1	2	5
PORNOGRAPHY	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
EXCLUSION	1	0	1	2	0	2	2	4

NOTE: This table indicates the number of deaf and hearing women who commented on various types of discrimination against deaf people, against women or against other groups.

The Figure 3. and Table 1. are intended to indicate the difference between the issues raised by deaf women and their hearing sisters. At the same time, there was a considerable difference between a topic being raised once, or raised several times, or not at all. Used in combination, Figure 3. and Table 1. will provide information about frequency and type of comments about discrimination. What it does not show is how many times a single woman raised the issue of discrimination, or gave specific examples. There were many issues raised and this topic was seen as important by all participants.

4. Priorities - Parenting, Relationships and Working.

In examining women's feelings about gender roles and about being deaf three categories of issues dominated the data. These areas were prioritized by women in three ways. First, the women spoke to these issues more often than other issues, second, the women indicated that they felt strongly about these issues or specific aspects of them and thirdly when combined with all the other data, including the tables comparing sisters, these three categories dominated the issues in importance. The three categories are not mutually exclusive and because the women who were interviewed did not create these categories there will be some strategy in assigning comments to these categories. Using a strategy of common topics and contexts, a list has been developed that identifies the various issues and how they relate to the women interviewed. This will also allow for a contextual review of the situation of deaf women and their hearing sisters.

Many of these topics were raised by more than one woman, and several issues crossed over between deaf and hearing sisters. Again, many of the issues also overlap with the other two priorities, described in the following lists.

PARENTING

ISSUES RAISED	LIVED EXPERIENCES
SINGLE MOTHERING	divorced deaf mother of young son, widowed deaf mother of teenagers, hearing mother caring for children alone while father absent, deaf mother raising deaf son alone
YOUNG MOTHERING	taking care of young children alone, deaf mother learning parenting skills, having three small children at home, not having contact with other adults
CO-PARENTING	sharing duties of raising children, separate shifts and roles with husband, same sex co-parent with deaf mother, traditional division of parenting

RELATIONSHIPS

ISSUES RAISED	LIVED EXPERIENCES
MARRIAGE	recent marriage to professional as student in same profession, long-term successful marriage, marriage breakdowns/divorce, meeting personal needs/love, communication in marriage
BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS	business venture as a woman, relationships with co-workers, sports/coaching relationship developing professional networks, deaf culture and community
PARENTS	living away from parents at deaf school, learning from parents, modelling, conflicts with parents, death or illness of parents, communication with parents

WORKING

ISSUES RAISED	LIVED EXPERIENCES
WORKING OUTSIDE THE HOME	returning to work after childbirth, finding and keeping employment, working in deaf education, arranging for child care at home, finding fulfilment in work
PROBLEMS ON THE JOB	discrimination because of deafness, sexism and harassment issues, career development and lack of communication on the job
WORKING INSIDE THE HOME	division of housework/child care, isolation and depression at home, communication at home, community involvement/social life

Summary of Analysis of Priorities

All the women interviewed had comments about family. Most of the women were mothers. Although most of the parenting experiences were similar between the deaf and hearing sisters there was a difference in their own relationships with their parents. As parents, the women felt loved by their children and happy in caring for them. The women also pointed to the isolation and frustrations of being at home with children without social contact. Only one of the women interviewed stayed at home until her children were teenagers before going back to work. All the other women began working when or before their children were school aged. Most of the hearing mothers work in the education or social service profession and have contact with children and other adults on regular basis. However, one notable exception was the hearing sister who is a student in engineering, after a career as a technician in the same field. She is recently married and has no children but describes her expectations in the future:

> I guess I still see mothering as the primary parental role and the father as the supporting parent, in that sense, although I certainly hope my husband and I are more equal partners. My father was very traditional in his role as father, we hardly knew him really. My mother was herself a very traditional wife and still worked very hard physically. She could do many things equal to or better

> than some men and I see her as a very well rounded person. My parents did not have a marriage based on equality. My father abused his power over his wife and had control over her. Now I am aware of more subtle things that show an imbalance of power for women.

Another hearing sister felt that being a mother has responsibilities that are underestimated by society:

> My husband lost his job and was looking for work and I was looking after the children. I didn't get out much without the children. I started to get very depressed. ... The woman is expected to raise the children while the men provide for the family. There are emotional demands on women to deal with children that are overall a greater responsibility for the mother than the financial responsibility is for the father.

One of the deaf mothers who was divorced explained her feels of parenting and relationships:

> I know someone loves me. I don't have a husband but my son gives me love. Of course it feels good relating to son growing up, but there are always problems. Now my son is starting puberty , wow, whew!I It's a big change in life, natural for me to be frustrated, but not just me, all parents. Because he is hearing sometimes its hard but all parents have that challenge. To worry about son, get depressed, its a big experience. I have been single mother for a long time. Hard to see what mother or father role is, until now. My partner joined me and now that fills the father role. Because my partner is hearing and my son is hearing it is a disadvantage for me. But now, my partner can talk and she can help with homework etc.
>
> The same woman spoke of when she was with her husband:
>
> As a single mother I have some control over my son. When I was with my husband there was less power. Because he thought he can do everything and women can't can't can't don't even permit to try. I divorced my husband, why, because of wife abuse, and I thought it was my fault. I thought I should do what other wives do like clean house.

There were many other stories of families, parenting and relationships which all overlapped with the issues of gender roles and deafness.

In terms of relationships that were successful there were more hearing women who spoke of good relationships than deaf women. Most of the hearing women were married and had been for a long time. In terms of the comments made most of the hearing women felt their relationships were very satisfying. particular mention was made that the men played important roles in their social and personal need satisfaction. Most of the women mentioned the shared parenting roles but they also recognized a division of labour that reflected the traditional male-female roles. "He cooks and cleans and we basically both do inside and outside chores" said one hearing woman who described sharing the house work and then later admitted that if she didn't tell her husband what to do he would leave it for her. She also added that if he still didn't do it she would eventually do the chores regardless. She was very clear though that as a child growing up male and female chores were explicit. She was asked about role models and this was her answer:

> I don't know who influenced me about being a woman but my father always told me to be myself and to go after what I want. Yeah, I think he was a role model. (pause) But my father, if you ask me, is the worst male chauvinist (laughing) The girls always had to do the dishes. I had 7 brothers and they could get away from chores because he would say you're the girl, you do it. (What did you do?) I did it! I wouldn't disobey him! (shaking head)

This woman was from a large family with other deaf members and she had often been asked to help fight for deaf rights, particularly for her brothers. In some ways she was more involved with deaf issues than the other sisters because she seemed to have a greater awareness of the various issues. But the gender roles still came out in conversation as she described the fight for her deaf brothers to be truck drivers. It is clear that family background has an influence on attitudes and each of the women in the interviews recognized this to greater and lesser degrees. When asked about experiences of discrimination in the workplace one hearing sister replied that she had not really felt any.

> Probably, could be because I am white, middle class and I'm from upper middle class so maybe there is less discrimination. Or because I have a higher education level and maybe if you had lower or no education and tried to get jobs you would run into discrimination. It just never happened to me. I'm not highly motivated in the professional area so I don't try. I don't want to be an administrator, I don't like being the boss and giving orders I'm not that kind of person, I like to work with children. So I don't go after that area but if I did I might face discrimination.

Hearing and deaf sisters do share the same family background but the very particular difference was the education system. Deaf students went to a residential school and spent most of their childhood away from home. They came home on holidays and during the summer but communication was minimal. Most of the deaf women acknowledged that they had adult supervisors at the school but did not accept them as parents, foster mothers or even role models. One deaf woman explained that the other deaf girls were role models more than the staff.

> My father worked every day and I did not see him often, my mom stayed home everyday, so she knew me better. I have no idea if they were role models because I went to deaf school. Mother and father and me were apart-(geographically) for many years. I learned a lot in America, also from deaf girls in my group, my age or older growing up. I was only home at Easter, Christmas and summer time. We had two supervisors one in day and one at night but one was very mean. We were afraid of her. She would punish students by making them write lines on both sides of paper. For no reason she punished one girl with long long hair by having her hair cut. Supervisor forced her to cut it and did not have parents permission. It was not fair.

The comments made by the deaf women demonstrated the important of other deaf people in their lives. Some of the deaf women described it as being like a family. They also felt there was less sexism in the deaf community, that anyone, male or female was welcomed and expected to be equal participant in the community. This is an important point in assessing gender consciousness. Because all the women interviewed had never seen

nor used a sign for gender some of the discussions were limited by vocabulary. However, all the deaf women demonstrated clear opinions on various topics related to male-female roles. In particular, the deaf women seemed to be very aware that some behaviours or traits were stereotypical of men or women but that they varied from person to person. Most of the hearing women felt the same way about deaf-hearing stereotypes. Both deaf and hearing women cited personal experience and "statistics" as support for their opinions.

One of the women interviewed is an educator in a deaf school. When asked if sexism or discrimination was less severe in that environment she answered:

> It is not as bad to be a woman, it is worse being deaf, even if you are in deaf schools. it is a real struggle. I feel for me it is a benefit to have skills and the right qualifications but it is still easier for hearing people to get jobs. I think deaf people are discriminated against more than women.

The problem of work place discrimination was raised by every deaf woman interviewed. It was also brought up by hearing sisters but hearing women focussed on sexism or problems getting better jobs rather than deaf issues.

One interesting similarity between the hearing and deaf women was their motivation to get back to work. Three of the hearing women were mothers before then re-entered the workforce and all of them felt the need to be part of activities outside the house. All of them indicated a sense of isolation at home.

> I was alone at home with the kids most of the time and when I could not control the children fighting, or crying or running around the house again and again it was to much. My husband was looking for work and we were worried about money and all of this was something I could not control. It really made me depressed and that depression lasted six years, until I was finally somehow able to walk away from it, with a lot of professional help.

Another hearing woman expressed a sense of jealousy that her husband got to go to work, meet with his friends and she was left at home, with the kids. Once she started back to work she had a sense of identity again that was "separate from being wife and mother".

Although work was important to all the women, there were only two women who were not mothers and their responses were a little different. One of the women was single and found most of her time caught up in work and activities that made her feel positive and fulfilled. The hearing woman was recently married and now a student and feeling a different kind of experience in school. She had been a technician in her field before going back to become an engineer. At school she felt that there was more immaturity and "blatant sexist foolishness". Although she described school as a place where she directs her own studies and feels comfortable, she does not have the status of a job and authority. One negative experience she encountered in school expressed the kind of resistance she has encountered.

> Last year some "boys" who were disrupting my concentration during a lecture, I turned and asked them to please be quiet, later I turned around and they had written BITCH across the back of my jacket. I felt attacked on a very cowardly level. I have never experienced anything like that on the job site. They said you don't really belong here so how dare you reprimand us.

At least two of the deaf women felt that they were passed over for promotions at work because they were deaf, and none of them felt that way about being women. In fact, two of the deaf women who work in female-dominated professions commented that obviously being female had not stopped the rest of their co-workers, but that being deaf was a severe handicap in their fields. Deaf women and hearing women both agreed that work was important to their sense of accomplishment and that income had something to do with it. All of the deaf women interviewed had been trained in some sort of post-secondary program and some more than once. After having children, many of the mothers went back to upgrade or learn a new skill. The hearing mothers and the deaf mothers had similar experiences in getting back into the workforce, and they were all positive.

One deaf woman commented that she felt she should have spent more time with her kids, although they did not agree with her, and so was not sure she should have worked so much during their childhood. She started part-time and eventually went back to work full-time when her children were in school. This is similar to one of the hearing sisters who started going back to work gradually, taking on assignments during the day while the kids were in school, until finally she had her own business. Another woman still works part-time and although she feels the financial rewards are important she said it is much more important to her than the money.

> We do need the money now, I don't know how anyone can survive on one income any more. Partly I work out of necessity, but even if I was earning half of what I earn now, I wouldn't stop. I need the social contact, support, because when I go home I don't get it. So I need to go to work.

From the women's perspective there was little choice in terms of working outside the home. Most of them felt they shared chores with their partners but that as women and mothers they were primarily responsible for the house and children while husbands were at work. All women, deaf and hearing, expressed the desire to work for personal satisfaction, but felt financially they had no choice but to work. These priorities indicate that the women understood their place in the larger social context, and could express their experiences.

B. **Comparing Sisters - Something in Common**

The advantage of having both deaf and hearing participants outweighed the difficulties of communicating between these groups. Rarely do hearing researchers have the opportunity to communicate with deaf subjects and hearing subjects on the same level. The unique opportunity to use sign language in interviews though positive, was also problematic in terms of recording of data and consequently in the reporting of results. This particular research project was not able to make direct comparisons between all comments in the interviews because each woman responded in very different ways to the questions. However, to enable some sister to sister and group-based comparisons some standard statements were prepared for

comment. The following tables reflect only part of the answers from the participants. Due to the length and content of responses some material was edited out. For example references to provinces or identity were removed.

There are no technologically viable ways at this point in time to provide side by side comparisons between sign language and English. For this reason all comments are presented in English. Bold type face represents translations from American Sign Language and plain type face represents either originally spoken or written language transcriptions. Readers are urged to review the content rather than the language of the responses to avoid "linguistic interference" as much as possible. In addition, there were some interviews that did not have all questions asked or answered which resulted in unequal responses by both members of any given pair. Ordering of responses has been mixed to ensure privacy but still allow for comparisons between hearing and deaf participants. Each generalization statement was selected purposely for its potential to elicit responses on either side and to stimulate expressions of meanings. The Tables which record the answers of women are followed by Tables which chart similarities and differences and the complexities of answers. Interpretation of the results is assisted by looking at the connections between pairs and among deaf and hearing women as groups.

The production of the charting of comparisons was done by approximating responses and developing the "best fit" in order to demonstrate where some differences, similarities and complexities existed. Some of the answers may not have fit a category exactly but if the intent was appropriate it was recorded in that category. In other cases women would start by saying they disagreed then end up agreeing after some thought. In some cases women did not answer at all, or expressed difficulty in answering. The categories are constructed from the patterns of answers but to understand the meanings behind the categories readers should refer back to the content of answers in corresponding tables.

There are some patterns of group cohesion indicated by agreement or disagreement although the other response categories were more varied. For example, none of the respondents felt that hearing people were better

drivers than deaf people, and all the women felt that it depended on the individual situation for mothers who wanted to work. However, the rationale behind these apparent agreements are varied. The categories of agreed and disagreed were only starting points for the responses. The discussion following these tables will review the significance of results.

This section will start with the issues relating to deafness. Tables 2 and 3 show that for politeness, none of the deaf women felt that deaf people are more polite than hearing people but one deaf woman actually disagreed. The others were split between not being able to comment and feeling it depended on the situation. The analysis varied from a comment about hearing people being able to have more social contact to the cultural differences between deaf community standards of politeness and hearing community expectations. This was consistent with other comments made during interviews, but clearly two of the women felt it was an awkward question to be asked. The deaf women indicated that they felt there was not a clear division between deaf and hearing people in terms of politeness and that some deaf were more polite than hearing people but also vice versa. The four hearing women disagreed with the statement, two of them emphatically saying deaf people were impolite. Only one hearing woman felt that in some ways deaf people were actually more polite, given their honesty and ability to be direct. This attribute is almost exactly the reason this subject was chosen because one of the common complaints hearing people have about deaf children and adults is their boldness - or lack of tact. For this reason a statement was constructed to get a response from both deaf and hearing women on this topic. It might have resulted in different answers if the statement had been that hearing people are more polite than deaf people. But as many hearing women as deaf women agreed that it really depended on the person and the situation rather than just being deaf or hearing. On this topic the deaf women and the hearing women had different responses when looked at as groups but some sisters were very close in their responses among the pairs. This may show a pattern when looking at the other Tables that some pairs are closer in their answers then are deaf women compared to their hearing sisters without looking at pairs.

Table 2: Politeness Comparison

"DEAF PEOPLE ARE MORE POLITE THAN HEARING PEOPLE"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
I am not sure, I think it is the same, I don't see any difference. Well, maybe polite for communicating if hearing people write down, that is nice not insult us, talking to deaf. Maybe they are different but both polite showing it in different ways. Deaf people tell direct statements, no matter deaf or hearing rather than "soft-indirect". Like complaining, deaf people tell truth rather than "indirect" so it looks less polite compared to hearing.	I have no idea. I suppose it would be the same for both deaf and hearing. I don't feel it is related to being deaf.
I don't think there is any difference - often I see people talking about "deaf way" as if it is different but I think we are all the same, I don't see much difference.	No, not in my view, deaf people are down to earth, laid back and casual and hearing people tend to be concerned about how they look, what other people's opinion is of them, almost paranoid. Hearing people have a problem with that so for being polite, deaf people don't seem to worry about that. So polite, or formal in a negative sense, I would say a reluctant yes.
I would say 50-50. It depends on culture and what is expected of each person, and on their own experiences. A deaf person among hearing people someone not used to being with hearing people might feel awkward, but it depends. Some deaf are "rebels" and want to disobey. Depends on environment, your perspective, not all deaf are the same.	I don't think you can lump all deaf or all hearing people into those groups like that, Why would being deaf or hearing affect your politeness? People are people.
Some are not always polite, they may tell dirty jokes and hearing have strict rules. Myself I have skills to follow both hearing and deaf culture, I show respect to hearing friends and I show my manners. Other deaf may be different.	NO, (very forceful) strongly disagree. Definitely NOT. There was probably a time when I thought that, on a social basis, and possibly deaf people with hearing people around are on their best behaviour, however, I have noted, in my own family that a lot of things that are normally considered polite or rude in hearing culture are different than what my sister interprets as being rude or not rude for deaf culture. I want to add something, because the language of the deaf is very expressive, visual with body language and facial expression, sometimes hearing people observing might think that they are being overly rude, anxious, angry or excited because of the difference in amount of expression. It's like you are on stage all the time, hearing person may misinterpret whether it's rude or not.
Oh no, hearing people have more contact, social world, meeting other people in the hearing world. Deaf can't learn manners that way. Myself, I always say bye face to face with my sister when I leave, even if she does not.	NO! I know a lot of deaf people who won't communicate with hearing people. They expect the hearing person to know sign language before they will try to communicate. They can be stubborn.

Table 3: Charting Sisters on Politeness

Deaf people are more polite than hearing people

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed				x							0	1
Not sure / unable to comment	x	x	x								2	1
Disagreed						x		x	x	x	1	3
It depends on individual and situation	x	x		x	x	x	x				3	3

The answers to the second question are illustrated in Tables 4 and 5. The statement was based on another stereotype about deaf people. The responses showed a great deal of awareness about this issue in both groups. In fact, this was the only topic about deafness that all women agreed with. Every woman disagreed that hearing drivers are better than deaf drivers. Although the rationale differed, there was consistency here between sisters as well. Three hearing women and two deaf women felt that deaf drivers were actually better than hearing drivers. The deaf women felt strongly that there was no difference, and that the public might think badly of deaf drivers but that this was unfounded. One hearing woman also felt that this public image was partly due to the charity appeal of many disability groups. There was agreement among two of the hearing women and one deaf that the question of driving depended on skill rather than hearing ability.

Table 4: Driving Comparison

"HEARING PEOPLE ARE BETTER DRIVERS THAN DEAF PEOPLE"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Ha, I never counted, NO. They are equal, looks the same to me. It depends on skills, I see no difference between hearing and deaf. But myself, I am pretty good driver. But men are more skilled driving, manoeuvring (handling curves/speed) than women.	NO, my deaf brothers are much better drivers; once I was driving with one of them, he pulled over because he saw the flashing lights of the ambulance even before I could hear it. But most people think that deaf are not good drivers. In school or society they learn about handicaps and they are always hearing about people in wheelchairs, the blind, and they are always asking for money, like the MS people. And when they are classifying different handicaps the deaf aren't really noticed by the government because it is invisible (the deafness).
No, I disagree, deaf people are better drivers than hearing. I have been driving for many years and my thirty years experience and research statistics have proven that deaf are better drivers. Deaf people have good vision and good scanning and awareness. They can sign at the same time as drive. Some people still don't believe that, of course we are still oppressed. Accidents happen, of course, same as hearing, but deaf are better drivers.	That would be a generalization that the general public would probably make. Like anything, deaf might be more cautious because of their disability and may pay attention to all the rules, on the other hand, I suppose they would be more careless if they didn't think their deafness causes them to have extra problems. I don't think that I could judge on the basis of only whether the person is deaf or not, it would be on the basis of being careful or not, I don't think its specific to deafness, no not at all.
NO, I disagree, it is equal, hearing people can hear but deaf drivers talk while driving and are trained how to drive. I don't see which one is better. Deaf are really trained to look around and be more watchful. I think that deaf can be better drivers than hearing people.	Disagree. WHY? There is no proof and the statistics have shown that it is not true. Deaf people can't hear but they may be more careful than hearing drivers.
Deaf people have always known how to drive better than hearing drivers. If you know what to do in a car it doesn't matter if you are deaf or not, it is just not true that hearing are better drivers.	NO NO my personal experience is that deaf people are a lot better drivers, hearing people could learn a lot from deaf drivers. I remember my mom telling me that when she came to a red light she would not go until the next car goes.
NO, I can't see why hearing drivers would be any better at driving than deaf people. I think they are the same, I have no problems driving.	No I disagree because driving is related to attitude and skill not to the ability to hear. Being a skilled driver is not related to hearing ability. It is both attitude and skill but that is all.

Table 5: Charting Sisters on Driving

Hearing people are better drivers than deaf people

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed											0	0
Stereotype that public perceives but untrue		x		x							0	2
Disagreed	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	5	5
It depends on skill	x			x						x	1	2
Deaf are better drivers		x	x		x	x		x			2	3

Tables 6 and 7 deal with response about the suitability of deaf schools versus hearing schools. Although this is a controversial topic it was an important one to address because of the strong feelings revealed by the answers. Although it is hard to compare the value of hearing schools and deaf schools in isolation to deaf people, the answers of the women revealed that they did in fact take into account the child or student. Deaf women used their personal experience and knowledge to support their opinions and their sisters used both the information they gained from their deaf sisters and their own personal views. The three deaf women agreed that deaf schools were better for deaf students, although two of those who agreed also said it would depend on the needs of the student. But one deaf woman felt it was too difficult to answer. Two of the hearing women agreed and one reluctantly disagreed and explained her disagreement by the perception that the needs of an individual child should be considered. Some of the women answering this question indicated there were values to both types of education and that it was difficult to give an answer. Three of the women mentioned that their sisters' experiences and opinions had affected their way of looking at it. None of the sisters in this question appeared to be in conflict with each other but some were unsure or gave relatively similar answers without complete agreement. This question was one which cannot be answered in any right or wrong way because it is certainly a matter of opinion. However the next question is one which may raise more discussion because of possibility of research demonstrating support for one or more opinions. This research was not intending to find the answer to this question, but to see what deaf women and their hearing sisters felt about the question.

Table 6. Deaf Schools Comparison

"DEAF SCHOOLS ARE BETTER FOR DEAF CHILDREN THAN HEARING SCHOOLS ARE FOR DEAF CHILDREN"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Yes, because more attention at deaf schools, in hearing schools it is a big class and lots of hearing children and only one or two deaf children, and teacher has no time for deaf students. It is so crowded and no explanation of what is being said. Lower education because you can't hear teacher. Hearing students should go to hearing school and deaf go to deaf school. Reason why? They have different needs (signed as in respectively own needs and own way to meet them-separately) Long time ago deaf went to hearing schools they could not understand, deaf schools are better now, I think.	I agree because my deaf sister says they are! I have taught handicapped children and I see that they are not happy in the mainstream and I feel that it is the same for deaf people. This feeling is based mainly on my understanding of how my sister feels on this topic. She agrees with it so I respect her feelings.
I am living proof. I went to deaf school and I have seen, I know. I didn't have opportunity to go mainstreamed in high school but I have seen students in mainstream and it is hard. It has to be an above average deaf student for mainstreaming. When I was in college and I watch lectures using interpreters you know how there is pause, and you have your hand up to ask a question, but there is a lag with interpreters so you can't interrupt and its very hard to get a chance to ask a question or comment. But it is worse for many of the younger students. Best to go to residential schools (signed institute).	Ah, this is a tough one for me. Umm, I believe, my opinion is not objective because of my sister being a deaf educator. I respect her intelligence and her ideas. I know she feels very definitely that in order for deaf culture to be preserved that deaf children have a better chance of being well-educated and living productive lives if they go to deaf schools. In her opinion by learning deaf language first, before English. She is quite opposed to mainstreaming, integration and I respect her right to have that opinion. As a teacher, I can see that sometimes handicapped children integrated with hearing children have a better chance to be part of the hearing world in the future. I know it is a small community, a lonely life; the only way that I see that deaf people will not feel ostracized, always oppressed and on their own, is to somehow be part of or involved. They are greatly outnumbered by hearing people, that is a fact of life. I have great concern that if children are raised completely separated they will not learn what the world has to offer. I guess it's very important to them to have deaf culture, just like many other minorities and we all have to learn to get along with each other, we need to further educate everyone. If today I had to make a decision, I would fight for the rights of deaf people to have their own language, culture and I would also want the opportunity for deaf and hearing children to learn about each other so they don't treat each other with distain of contempt.

Table 6. Deaf Schools Comparison (Cont.)

Deaf schools are very much better. Deaf students should go to deaf school and not mainstreaming. Why? More communication, sign language and can watch more and learn more using signing than talking. Better in deaf schools. I went to deaf school for many years and benefit from sign language. Yes, deaf school best.	There are individual children with different abilities. Some deaf would benefit more from integration and some would be more handicapped by integrating. My brother did better at a hard of hearing school which was partly integrated but I know my sister would have done worse. Probably depends on individual ability or skills. I think a child's parents would know which was best for their child. There should be a choice.
Mmm. Both schools have good and bad points. I think it would depend on the skills in learning. If deaf children are finding difficulty learning in a hearing school they are better off in deaf schools. If it's hard to learn, a deaf school is good, but if you need a challenge you could go to a hearing school. It varies for each individual.	I have no way of knowing that. I just don't know... Well, I think after discussing with my sister, that one of the benefits of the deaf school is the building of strong relationships, or comraderie among the deaf students. Since they were all deaf and they had to face the same struggles, they lived together and they really connected. I know she would disagree with mainstreaming deaf kids into hearing schools because you lose that sense of sameness, and identity which is really important. But for math, sciences or course work I have no idea but for the social factor I would say yes.
To communicate with people you need to share a language. Sign language is used by deaf people so a deaf school makes communication easier. But education is important too, so where you get your best education depends on many issues. For deaf students, hearing schools may not be best place.	Mmmm. I'm not sure, this is very tricky. I think this is a loaded question. I think the answer is it depends, you have to look at the situation and at each individual child and their family. It depends on what that specific child needs but I think that generally yes, but there are many other factors that would influence that decision; such as if the parent is deaf or if the child needs to be with deaf because like in my family my parents could already give language to my sister. Regardless which system it is, mainstream or deaf school, the whole system needs to improve both in deaf schools and mainstreaming.

Table 7: Charting Sisters on Deaf Schools

Deaf schools are better for deaf students than hearing schools

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed	x	x	x		x			x	x		4	2
Difficult to answer; pros and cons to both				x			x	x		x	1	3
Disagreed						x					0	1
It depends on individual needs of student				x		x	x		x	x	2	3

The Tables 8 and 9 show answers comparing the education for hearing students with that of deaf education. Using achievement levels, literacy rates, satisfaction and personal stories, it can be presumed that hearing students, in general, get a better education than deaf students. This is of course, not a hard and fast rule, but it is something that could be demonstrated statistically. The historical research in this dissertation also indicated that deaf students were not offered high school courses at the same level as hearing students. Qualitatively, many people still feel that some benefits of deaf education outweigh the perceived academic deficits, but there are others who deny that a compromise is necessary. The intention then is not to prove one perception over another, for that is the job of another eager researcher, but to examine how and why women expressed their opinions. One women felt that in an ideal situation there would be no difference between deaf education and hearing education, but currently the system is run by hearing people, and it is not ideal so, it is difficult to compare. But one deaf woman felt that it was too difficult to answer. Most of the hearing women had mixed, complicated answers which ranged from agreeing in some circumstances to disagreement that was hesitantly offered.

Only one hearing woman disagreed that hearing students get a better education, while three agreed and one found it difficult to compare. Only two deaf women agreed that hearing students had a better education but almost all of them felt it depended on the situation. Two mentioned that now it was more equal but during their schooling hearing education was far better. For two different reasons, deaf women were unsure or felt they could not compare the two. One was not really comfortable answering and thought yes, then no, then just agreed that she was unsure. This is very typical of some of the answers to questions that were either ideologically loaded or dealing with uncommon topics. Possibly some of the women had ideas that could not really have been expressed as an answer to that question.

Table 8: Quality of Education Comparison

"HEARING STUDENTS GET A BETTER EDUCATION THAN DEAF STUDENTS"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Yes yes they are far ahead of us. At my time deaf schools not have equal programs. Hearing schools better and deaf schools not modern only a few courses. But now? Deaf schools much better. I'm surprised how much improvement, very good, better than my time.	I KNOW IT. Because my sister, when she finished twelve years of school she only had the equivalent to my grade six. I know from real experience.
Deaf or hearing? I can't answer that. Well, I think so, yes because of my children, (hesitant) No I'm not sure.	Disagree, I guess I would disagree. Education means different things to different people. My level of education is different than everyone in my family and there is a wide variety. My deaf sister's education might have been right for her, not better or worse, just different. Depending on her needs and what the education was meant for, i.e. goals. So it would be hard to say that generally hearing or deaf people have a better education. Education is very individual.
How can you ask that? Wait, if we had right system it would be better in deaf schools, but you can't compare. If same rules, same teachers, deaf education would be better but I can't compare two different systems. Each has positives and negatives but they are different. They are biased because most hearing run deaf schools.	I would say there are better opportunities available for hearing children and therefore the statement is probably true. I don't think it's intentional, unfortunately there is a lot of lack of understanding and knowledge, and because it is a small group of people they get less education.
Depends on their family background and discipline. I have noticed that students with more discipline do better in school. Some students have a lack of respect and an attitude problem. Depends on students.	Oh yes, deaf students are denied the right to use their own language so when they are given language instruction using English they have little basis for the rest of the fundamentals.
No I disagree, they benefit from school differently by equal. Depends on what they learn individually. But at my time, deaf schools were lower, we did not have higher grades. Hearing schools had better education but they raised the courses not in deaf schools. Deaf schools are getting close to hearing, more equal.	I don't know if that is true. I think it should be the same education. I think the education at a deaf school should be the same because the Department of Education sets the curriculum and it would be a standard for all schools.

Clearly the deaf women wanted their education to be better, or rather equal to hearing education, but some were reluctant to admit that this was not yet true. One hearing woman, who is a teacher, felt that the schools should be of a similar standard because the government sets the curriculum. The

answers in this case demonstrated more difference among deaf and hearing sisters than previous questions. There is strong agreement, however, that the quality of education depends on the student and the situation to a great degree. This is the last of the questions relating to deafness oriented statements. The next section looks at gender based issues. The similarities and differences among deaf and hearing sisters on deafness can usefully be compared to their views on gender.

Table 9: Charting Sisters on Quality of Education

Hearing students get better education than deaf students

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed	x	x				x		x	x		2	3
Difficult to compare; not sure			x		x					x	2	1
Disagreed				x							0	1
It depends on individual and situation	x	x		x	x	x	x		x		4	3

The apparent agreement between deaf women, hearing women, and in many cases between sisters on issues relating to deafness can be considered while looking at gender oriented questions. The first gender oriented question was the only question which used children instead of adults. Tables 10 and 11 show the comparison of responses to the suggestion that boys are more aggressive than girls. On this question only two of the pairs agreed with each other, and both agreed that this statement was true. So two pairs of sisters both agreed that boys are more aggressive than girls, with one set qualifying that this was relating to physical aggressiveness only. The other women disagreed among each other. Only one deaf woman and one hearing woman (not sisters) disagreed that boys were aggressive and both stated it depended on the individual more than being male or female. One deaf person did not agree or disagree specifically, but said it did depend on each person. Three out of five pairs disagreed with each other on this question while hearing women were more united on agreement and/or qualified agreement, deaf women varied in their rationale and answers. Almost all mothers in this group used their own

experience as validation for comments, while some used observation or philosophy. A special note for this point is that it was the first question asked, and further questions elicited more expressive responses, although the participants had the opportunity to elaborate subsequently, this was one of the few questions that was not frequently amended.

Table 10 Aggression Comparison

"BOYS ARE MORE AGGRESSIVE THAN GIRLS"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Yes I have seen it. I noticed it myself. But why? Really, strength in boys themselves. Boys are tough, growing up like men. I have seen it in my children.	No. I disagree. In my family my son is aggressive but in my friends' family it is her daughter who is the strong one, she is aggressive and her son is passive and quiet. Everyone is an individual person with their own values, strengths and weaknesses and tempers or whatever, we are all different.
Of Course, their bodies influence that, world influences boys and men have power over women. They feel they are strong, "tough" of course I agree with that. Boys are born that way, but society influences them, world makes them more rough but girls behave more quiet.	Yes, I agree, have no girls but I know others that have girls and I am a teacher and it looks like boys are more aggressive.
Aggressive? Not necessarily, girls can be very aggressive, like in work. Boys can be passive or nervous or scared. Both, not only boys, can be either, both can be both (both boys and girls can be both passive and aggressive.	Traditionally yes, but there is pressure for society to change. Men can't have babies so women have to stay home and take care of the babies, the house, make meals... The roles were more defined by physically being male or female.
Yes, in young children, yes but they change so fast. Later sometimes girls can change more tough.	Yes and no.. if physically yes, if you are talking about children. But if you think about women and girls, they have aggression about meeting the needs of their children, compared to men, that's my personal opinion but generally I think that society thinks men are more aggressive physically than women.
I don't think so, well I have daughters, but each person is an individual. Doesn't matter if male or female.	Physically, I would agree that yes boys are more aggressive but girls are more aggressive socially. Girls develop their relationships and communication faster. My first reaction to the statement is yes, because from watching boys and girls it is my perception that boys are more active and girls tend to learn the social manoeuvres.

Table 11: Charting Sisters on Aggression

Boys are more aggressive than girls

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed	x		x	x		x	x	x		x	3	4
Physically yes, otherwise no							x	x		x	1	2
Disagreed											1	1
It depends on individual					x				x		2	1

Tables 12 and 13 represent the charted answers to the question about caregiving. The choice of words for this question was to address issues of nurturing or caring without the connotation of "parent" but almost all the women responded as if the question was about caregiving for children, and usually in a family context. In answering this question two sisters who were both mothers compared themselves to their husbands while other women answered through observation of personal opinions. It is interesting to note that the two non-mothers in the group (not sisters) had differing opinions, one felt that gender did not determine if a person was a good caregiver but that structural constraints made it a choice for some women while the other felt that women professionals were more caring than male professionals. Two pairs of sisters agreed completely that this was true. The other three pairs were in disagreement. In each case the qualification was offered, by two deaf women and one hearing woman, that it depended on individuality. In these three cases of disagreement it was the deaf women who felt that women were better caregivers than men while the hearing sister disagreed. One deaf woman said that with more experience men could be as good but that their lack of experience makes it difficult. This is an indication of differences in gender perception between deaf and hearing women, yet two of the pairs agreed completely. There are often similarities between sisters that are not visible when looking at the group comparisons alone. Using the answers given in the written form it can be understood how complex the answers were. The differences between sisters become more evident when looking at why they held certain views and not just at whether they agreed or disagreed.

Table 12 Caregiving Comparison

"WOMEN ARE BETTER CAREGIVERS THAN MEN"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Interesting, as a woman myself I see women and men, for example, with medical people, I see a difference between men and women. Many years I had only male doctors, there was no choice at that time. I changed doctors to female doctor and she takes time to write back and forth. New woman doctor much better, willing to share information, read and talk to me. I think women are more caring, as professionals.	I think that emotionally women have a greater ability to cope with certain kinds of stress. The fact that the mother is the initial caregiver, hugging, rocking, breast feeding, cuddling, the mother has the most time to do that, quite often, generally women are more in touch with the children.
Yes, I agree, men have no experience giving birth, raising children, breast feeding, controlling them. They leave the messy jobs to women. That's why women are more experienced at caregiving with children.	Yes! As a group I believe women are better caregivers than men. (emphasis in the original)
I agree, if men had more experience it would depend on the individual. If he is willing to learn that is wonderful, and if not, that is the whole problem. Really, sometimes the fathers are better parents. It depends.	No, again from my personal life, if I was left alone with my children it would be a mess. I think that when I watch my husband with my children, he doesn't worry about some things that I am really trying to analyze, he just lets go. I know my husband is important to them, and together we are a team.
Both hearing and deaf? Yes women pay more attention than men. I take care of my children more than my husband.	NO, my husband is a very good "house mom" so I know through experience that both of us are good caregivers.
Yes I think so, I have noticed that women are capable of giving better care and thinking of others more than men. Maybe I am biased.	No, I would not agree with that, some men are as good providers as women. I think the ability to care for people is based on the character of the person, not on whether the person is male of female. I think a lot of women opt for the caregiver role, because of the discrimination in the workplace and so a lot of them end up sort of forced into caregiving for a paid or unpaid position.

Table 13: Charting Sisters on Caregiving

Women are better caregivers than men

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed	x	x	x	x	x		x		x		5	2
Yes, if more experienced men can be good					x			x			1	1
Disagreed						x		x		x	0	3
It depends on individual					x					x	2	1

The next two comparisons involve family issues, particularly related to women and men. The first one illustrated in Tables14 and 15 is about single fathers raising children. One of the pairs did not answer this question so this may affect the perceived numbers in agreement. In fact three out of four of the pairs did not agree that single fathers should raise children alone. Only one deaf woman agreed with this statement, and she qualified it by stating it would depend on the man. Her sister was actually not too far from agreeing, and might have been expressing the same concern in a different way because she felt it would be hard for a single father but possible. Three of the hearing women felt that it would be difficult but possible, and one of those hearing women's deaf sister agreed with that comment. That same pair also felt it depended on the individual and their motivation and skills. Another pair of women agreed that it varied with individual men but they also both disagreed in general with the statement. These questions were asked to women who for the most part were married or had been married. The next question about mothers raised some very strong emotions about the issue of parenting.

Table 14. Single Fathers Comparison

"SINGLE FATHERS SHOULD NOT RAISE CHILDREN ALONE"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Disagree. Sometimes women are unfit mothers or depends on situation and father has rights to take child. Divorce, sometimes fathers are wonderful, better than mothers. It depends who is best.	I disagree. Single fathers can raise the kids, if the father wants to raise the kids. Anyone can learn how to raise kids.
Well..(pause) it depends if single fathers are interested and care, fine, but if not NO, not a good idea for them to take care of children alone.	My husband does the same work I do and he could raise the children as easily as me. But we share the work in the house so it would be hard for either of us to be single. We really do the same work just at different times, he goes to work and I stay home then I go to work and he stays home.
(thinking...sign for serious, whew) I never really thought about that. You mean widower or divorced? Single fathers, I see no reason why not if he is already experienced as a father, but to adopt or... it is not automatic like it is for a woman, men have different kind of responsibilities, but it depends.	I don't agree or disagree. I think its very difficult for fathers. Because of the genetic makeup he is not instinctively, necessarily, the one who is able to give the kind of emotional support that many women seem to have a natural infinity for. Not to say they can't work at it or develop it, and that's not to say the child will be damaged for life if they don't have female role models. There are other ways to get female role models.
I think today both men and women are single parents, Women are more often taking care of children but single fathers can too. No problem.	I am not sure how I would cope without my husband but I know it would be harder for him without me. I do all the care in the home and he has a job which makes it difficult to spend time with the family.
Not asked this question	No response to this question

Table 15: Charting Sisters on Single Fathers

Single fathers should not raise children alone

	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed											0	1
Not sure / unable to comment									x	x	2	1
Disagreed	x	x		x		x	x	x			1	3
It depends on individual and situation	x	x	x	x	x	x		x			3	3

Tables 16 and 17 describe the responses to the question about mothers raising children before they go to work. As one can see almost none of the women agreed that women should raise children before going to work, but they had a wide variety of rationales for their answers. This was the only gender based question which resulted in almost total agreement from all deaf and hearing women, and it was a relatively subjective agreement. The Tables show that all deaf women and all hearing women felt it depended on the situation. This was the only situation of total agreement for gender based issues in all the questions. However, the deaf women were more likely to feel it was important to work because of money or interest while the hearing women felt the children's age, needs and circumstances in the family were the important variables. Two deaf women and one hearing women felt that while working is necessary, it would be best if mothers could stay home with their children, at least until school age. In this measure most of the sisters in pairs had very similar answers, although as a group the deaf women were more practical and less ideological. Hearing statements that illustrate this include: "Not all women want to be mothers", and "women can do whatever they want", where the deaf women tried to rationalize the need to work. The one sister who changed her answer after the final document was finished wanted to make the point that she believes that it is more important to give time to children then to buy them things that they "want". Her concern is reflected in the chart as both agreeing with the statement and qualifying that it depends on the situation. Her "reservation" was that for single mothers work is necessary. None of the other women asked to have their comments in this section changed but it was important to allow this clarification of perception.

This analysis was based on pre-set statements which may or may not have been effective in getting at women's actual beliefs. There is always a risk in making a categorical statement, particularly if deaf or hearing women perceive that they should be agreeing with something that is actually a false construct. In general, I sensed that the women didn't give their full answers to these particular questions since they expanded on many of their topics later. However, for the purposes of comparison, and particularly attempting direct comparison with language that is not in its original form, this has been consistent with remarks made throughout the research.

Table 16 Working Mothers Comparison

"WOMEN SHOULD RAISE CHILDREN FIRST BEFORE GOING TO WORK"

DEAF WOMEN	HEARING SISTERS
Today you need money. If you have a husband who works in a shitty job or whatever, need to have more money. Women should stay with babies for breastfeeding. I believe that children need to have equal exposure from mother and father.	I don't believe there are hard and fast rules, yes and no. Every person is an individual and has choices. If I had a choice between raising my children on welfare and getting a job which paid me a better wage and allowed me to give my children a better life and a better understanding of how the world works, I would have no hesitation in getting a job. I don't think that everyone has that choice. I take that back, sometimes people feel that they have the choice between a poor paying job and welfare. And it's a difficult decision which is better? Me, being on welfare or me trying to show that I'm doing the best I can with what I have been given? I don't believe the world is fair. I don't believe that everyone has equal opportunities, that would be utopia. It would be wonderful that's just not the way it is.... What I mean is that each person as a child has to be treated differently, sometimes a child would have needs that would mean it was far more important for the mother to be at home. An autistic child, would need constant attention and it might not matter whether he lived in low cost housing, the real need is for constant human interaction. Also, for women there is a great deal of pressure to work not just as a homemaker, feeling like half a person, but to have a career. Some people don't want a career. But with the coming of freedom for women also comes additional pressures which sometimes leave women caught between two worlds.
I did. I stayed home for 18 years then I got a job. My children are 17 and 16. I like to work but my husband, his opinion, we not afford to send children to daycare so I stayed home take care of children. It depends on what you want. It is fine for both (to work/or stay home).	They should do whatever they want. Only you know when you are ready to have children and whether you go to work before or wait until after it doesn't matter.

Table 16 Working Mothers Comparison (Cont.)

That's ancient! Now, today NO because we required to have money, forces women to look for work, after getting pregnant and having baby must go to work. If they had money maybe women could stay home look after children, to help them it is important for mothers to be with children, but impossible today because need money.	I believe that women should not work if kids suffer, but when the kids are old enough to go to school it is not as important. I agree -with reservations. My only reservation is for single women who must work - but aside from that I feel if you take on the responsibility of a child you should be willing to make a few sacrifices during his/her early life -or don't have a child. You only have to work in a day care for a short while to realize that not all children are liked and not all are well taken care of. It's scary. I hold 'old-fashioned' views on child rearing even though it means less income for the family and fewer social contacts for the mother for a few years. Sometimes I think we confuse needing more money with wanting more money. 9.
It all depends on why you want work or want children. Some women don't want to work they want to stay home, but some women prefer working. Sometimes children are independent and mothers can work, maybe part-time, it depends.	I felt jealous and isolated when I was alone with the children. My husband had a job and contact with other people. I really missed that when I was at home, and I think most women need more contact. So, getting a job is one way to make sure you are not isolated.
Yes, well, it depends. For myself I prefer to raise my children myself. Other women can't or they feel they would rather work because they can't stay home. When kids are in school or old enough and you have nothing to do all day then women are better off working.	(Laughing) NO, that's silly, not all women want children.

Table 17. Charting Sisters on Working Mothers

Women should raise children first before going to work	SISTERS										TOTALS	
RESPONSES	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H	D	H
Agreed						x					0	1
Ideally yes, but in reality mothers need to work	x	x			x						2	1
Disagreed				x	x						1	2
It depends on individual and situation	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	5	5

9. The sister who answered this question originally disagreed and was not satisfied that her answered expressed her strong feelings on this topic. At the last draft she requested changes to be made. This reflects her final comments on the issue but is not the same as what she said in interviews or previous corrections/editions.

The concluding chapter will review the goals and the questions as well as comment on the process itself, but in terms of analysis, this material was and is intended for exploratory purposes and cannot be seen as being representative of all deaf women or hearing sisters. The most interesting comparisons seemed to occur when the issues of gender and deafness were based on personal experience. Deaf women live deafness while hearing women can only see it from the outside. Deaf women live as women in the same way that their hearing sisters do but their perception of that experience is framed by a context which puts them into a category as "deaf" that does affect their lives as women. In a dialectic of knowing and doing, or of hearing status and gender, there is clearly an impact on meaning that results from living in a social context with the ascribed characteristics of being female and being deaf. Deaf community members may not overtly determine status by gender, as the women have the sense of a family, there are still tacit expectations that the "family" members will do what "mothers" and "fathers" or "sisters" and "brothers" do. Perhaps this analogy of family is even more appropriate than it seems. Certainly the impact of a minority culture on identity is one of grounding and membership but it may in fact eclipse part of the "gender" experience for deaf women.

The perception that deafness is more important to deaf women is verified by the responses from deaf women that indeed it is of more significance to them that they are deaf than being female. Although they may not be aware of the constructs that gendering creates for them and their families, deaf women are conscious of socially accepted norms of male and female roles. It is clear that while identifying as deaf first, these women live their lives as females, and experience life as women. The agreements and disagreements on constructed statements cannot adequately represent their opinions but the opportunity does provide for interesting analysis. Deaf women may have answered differently to gender questions due to personal beliefs but may have also been influenced by the value or emphasis they placed on those issues. There was clearly an influence between deaf women and their hearing sisters on the issues relating to deafness since most of the hearing sisters used their deaf sisters as primary reference points. As women, the deaf women probably did not use their hearing sisters as reference points and since being female was the common feature,

they each had experiences of their own to draw from. Deaf women experience being women as deaf women and not as hearing women. Their connections with Deaf culture cannot be shared directly with their hearing sisters, but there are ways to bridge the language barriers. Notwithstanding all the differences that deafness can influence, hearing and deaf sisters do have something in common - they **are** women.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS

A. Research as a Process

As proposed in the introduction, this project was intended to be an empowering process for all of the participants. In the social scientific field there is all too often a focus on finding new truths, new patterns or new phenomena, and not enough focus on the impact that research has on the "subjects" or "objects" of investigation. As a feminist, and as a Deaf woman I felt obliged to ensure that this research project would be empowering and not dehumanizing. The process of researching gender roles for deaf women and their hearing sisters evolved as it was taking place. As many other researchers have found the responses do not always answer the questions asked. Indeed, as part of this process I developed or incorporated new questions. In order to evaluate both the project and its results it is important to look at the original objectives and determine if set goals had been reached. In addition to using this as a measure of achievement, the research must also answer the questions that participants raised. The following questions were posed for the research by myself and the participants in the project.

a) What are the meanings of gender roles for deaf women who attended schools for the deaf and
b) are these roles different than those of their hearing sisters?

Some of the questions asked by women participants in the research include:

a) Is being deaf worse than being a woman?
b) How do deaf women learn family roles while living away from home?
c) Do we have something in common even if we cannot share a language?

In this research an honest attempt was made to access the meanings of gender for both deaf women and their hearing sisters. In order to bridge the language barrier that normally prevents hearing researchers from talking to

deaf women I used sign language with all Deaf participants and interpreters with the hearing women. However, the qualitative and indeed quantitative difference between responses in English and responses in Sign Language led me to frustration and confusion.

I had learned from Deaf women many of their ideas and thoughts but it seemed unfair and perhaps unethical to attempt comparison with their hearing sisters. Even after reviewing the transcriptions in English and validating the content as their own, Deaf women's "meanings" had to be manipulated in order to be represented in English, and on paper. For hearing sisters, the translation during the interviews may have also affected their responses, yet the final version of their responses was in written English and validated by each in written English. To qualify the following conclusions, I wish to argue that regardless of intent and integrity of this research it could not do justice to the Deaf women participants. I expect that one day society and technology may evolve to the point where this kind of research can suitably and effectively present Deaf women's views in its original mode of Sign Language. Without such methods, this project concludes with a review of how the research questions can be answered at this time.

Meanings of Gender for Deaf Women:

Deaf women who attended schools for the deaf were exposed to a "total institution" by both their deafness and their school. In many ways the school became their home.

> In a very real sense deafness itself acts as a "total institution" which , in this case, is a condition and not a place. In deafness one is isolated and cut-off from the wider society -- and this includes parents, siblings, television, the media and on and on..... students have colonized into a language community. They accept the "total institution" (Goffman) as "home" where a shared language community and friends are to be found. (Evans and Falk, 1986:208)

The deaf women in this research did not see the school staff as a family, but did see the other deaf students as a family. When asked about gender roles

most of the participants relied on their experiences as girls in school or as adult women in the Deaf community to offer responses. Only one of the Deaf women felt she had learned primarily from her mother, and in this case her mother was also Deaf. Although all participants showed great respect for their families and even gratefulness at having provided them with the experience of deaf schooling, most felt their community was the Deaf community, like a big family. The meanings of gender roles were not a priority for the deaf women in the research, although curious, they felt that their main concerns related to being deaf and using sign language. Their views on gender roles revealed a fairly typical, mainstream perception of traditional Western roles for men and women.

Most of the Deaf women knew that some stereotypes were outdated but that some were based in fact, or in practical reality. From their responses to interview questions, none of the deaf participants seemed to feel that gender stereotypes were as "false" as those relating to deafness. The meaning of gender for deaf women was clearly one of experiencing life as women and seeing others live as men, as fathers, sons, husbands or workers. Their ideas were based in lived experiences as Deaf first and woman second. The only exception was the participant who felt she was primarily a person, a human, and neither deaf not female first. This researcher feels that this conclusion is accurate and valid in terms of the views of women who participated in the project.

Different from Their Hearing Sisters:

This research used hearing sisters primarily to determine if deaf women's views were different than their sisters. These sisters did not attend deaf schools and for the most part used English as a first language and lived with their families throughout childhood. In almost all cases the hearing sisters had education similar to or slightly in advance of their deaf sisters and this in itself could account for more explicit views on gender and gender roles. Differences among the groups of sisters were greater than differences among pairs of sisters. The major difference in comparing the sisters was in emphasis. Where deaf women pointed out discrimination against them on the basis of their deafness, hearing sisters felt sexism was a problem. Also, hearing women pointed to the problem of violence against women,

pornography and safety issues more often than did their deaf sisters. There is a difference between deaf women and their hearing sisters, particularly in terms of the strength of their feelings about particular issues such as parenting, working and discrimination. Deaf sisters do demonstrate a more traditional perception of gender roles than do their hearing sisters. The hearing sisters, however, demonstrated liberal and well-informed attitudes about deaf culture and deaf education despite not being "Deaf".

QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED BY PARTICIPANTS

a) Is being deaf worse than being a woman?

To all the women in this project being deaf is seen as more of a problem than being a woman. All deaf women expressed the feeling that being a hearing woman would increase their opportunities and abilities in many ways, while being a deaf man would only slightly increase opportunities. None of the hearing women perceived being "female" to be a handicap in that it could be compared to being deaf. Most felt that of various disabilities being deaf was not as severe as some conditions but that it was far more difficult than being a woman. Language and attitude problems were cited as the most common reasons that being deaf is "worse" than being a woman. It was pointed out frequently that deaf people are in a minority and thus have a marginalized position regardless of their gender. In the research process this topic was raised by almost every participant in every interview.

b) How do deaf women learn family roles while living away from home?

This question was asked and answered as part of the role model questions. Deaf women usually had more difficulty answering that question than their hearing sisters. Some Deaf women said they had no "ONE" role model, that they felt like "LONERS" or hung around with a group but had no single person to look up to. Most of the hearing women answered with either a parent or a sibling. One of the hearing sisters added that her male coaches had played an important part in her life, and thought of this after discussions about her family role models. Only one of the deaf women felt her mother was her primary role model, although several of them did admit they had learned skills from their mothers and other family members, but these answers came with further discussion. In all cases the Deaf women did not

see school staff as primary role models, especially the dormitory staff. One deaf women saw a particular teacher, who was hearing, as influential in her growth but commented that she lacked adult deaf role models while she was growing up. Several deaf women commented that they first had role models at deaf college programs.

Most of the deaf women felt they learned family roles primarily through experience of trying and experimenting. Some felt confident after high school but almost all of the deaf women felt they were not given adequate information or instruction at their schools. Deaf women did credit their families for support and exposure to relationships but the communication and geographic barrier prevented most deaf women from fully being able to model those roles.

c) Do we have something in common even if we cannot share a language? The women in this project were particularly eager to communicate with each other. Despite distance and language barriers, all women wanted to know about their sisters. The only answer possible from this research is that deaf and hearing sisters DO have something in common that transcends the language barrier. Only two hearing women in the project could sign well enough to communicate fluently with their deaf sisters. Other sisters used combination of speech, gestures and fingerspelling. Clearly, it is possible for hearing sisters to learn sign language but it is less likely that deaf women will become fluent in speech or lipreading. Despite the existing and pre-existing language barriers the difference between sisters were less than the differences among groups.

What do the sisters have in common? Primarily their experiences as women in a world that treats women differently, and in a world that structures around class. Education levels seemed to be very similar in most cases the hearing sister was only slightly better educated than the deaf sister and in one case the Deaf sister held a higher degree than the hearing sister. The experience of being female, and having an ascribed "class" seems to be shared by the sisters and particularly manifested in employment situations. Deaf women and their hearing sisters may have differences in what they see as gender roles, and how serious discrimination is against deaf people, but throughout the research there were similarities between sisters that seemed to unite

them despite language differences. Family life and relationships with other adults seemed to be important to all participants but similarities between sisters were stronger than those among deaf women and among hearing sisters. The lives of deaf women are tangibly different than their hearing sisters, but they certainly have something in common.

B. Deaf Women as Subjects and Participants

Deaf women have not been asked to participate in research like this very often. A thorough literature review revealed only minimal survey research about deaf women. The few that were found focussed mainly on vocational interests, occupational stereotypes and choice of peers. While very informative and important, these projects did not explore the meanings of gender for deaf women, and did not compare them to hearing women, although some studies compared them with deaf men. In fact, only one study was found, that asked both deaf and hearing women about gender issues and it was an American project that used written survey research. (Anderson & Krueger,1982 later repeated by Stauffer and Long, 1990)

The attempt to do an ethnographic interview with deaf women is, to my knowledge, unique. This project provided an opportunity for women to answer questions in sign language, over the TTY phone and also in writing. By allowing deaf women to become active subjects of this investigation, the project also empowered them to become participants. This result for women who did participate was a chance to explore their own feelings and ideas about their identity, their gender roles and their family. Deaf women had to take risks to be part of this project , and in fact several declined to complete the project, while others were reluctant to continue but did. In other research projects deaf women who responded never had a chance to defend or explain their responses and may never even see the project report. This process allowed women to participate in the writing of the report, and hopefully in the process of developing more questions as a result.

As participants in a research project that was not of their chosing, the deaf women led me to develop new questions and see new patterns in their responses. Some of them responded reluctantly or admitted they did not

know or had no pre-set opinion when asked specific or open-ended questions. Before too long they were telling stories and answering many unasked questions with their expressive and vivid descriptions. As subjects of a graduate student's investigation, they were co-operative and patient while as participants in research about deaf women and hearing sisters they were enthusiastic and helpful.

I expect they will have comments and criticisms about this final report and I encourage their continued development and critical knowing of themselves and the world around them.

C. Hearing Sisters, Teachers, and Interpreters

This section is intended to reflect the diversity among the participants in this project. Deaf sisters were a homogeneous group only because they had all attended deaf schools and were willing participants in this project. Hearing sisters, and teachers of deaf children, and the interpreters in this project had far less in common. I want to acknowledge the professional interpreters who participated in both the interviewing and the transcription from videotapes, as active members of the research team. The Association of Visual Language Interpreters of Canada, and other professional organizations, require interpreters to translate faithfully without omission or distortion or elaboration. All content of communication during an interpreting assignment is considered confidential and cannot be discussed outside the specific assignment. Despite the ethics of being non-intrusive as a third party in an interpreting assignment, all the interpreters played key roles in enabling the research to access both hearing and deaf women and to get the language into a written form for presentation.

The hearing sisters who participated in this project may have been misled. At least one sister indicated she thought the research was more about siblings than about gender, yet she continued to co-operate and participate eagerly. This project was originally about deaf women. Hearing sisters were added to provide for an interesting comparison, and to investigate a population of sisters rather than unknown strangers. However, through the process of this research the hearing sisters became active participants in the process. Not

only did they attempt to communicate more and visit their deaf sisters but there was an expression of concern and caring for their sisters. Hearing sisters could genuinely have had no interest in this project and been unwilling to participate. In fact, more deaf women than hearing women withdrew from the project and out of the original 20 women being considered for this project the first 5 to decline were deaf, and only 2 hearing sisters declined before their sisters did. The sisters were patient and thorough when using interpreters and reading through transcripts. More hearing women than deaf women added comments beyond editing existing responses, and generally the hearing sisters showed a great interest in the outcome of the project. All the hearing sisters were supportive and positive about the research methodology, and particularly noted the use of written questions and opportunities to correct or edit their responses.

They were also appreciative of the excellent quality of interpreting. One comment made by a hearing sister was that there was a considerable improvement in the second interview, due to the skill of the second interpreter. She noticed this during the interviews but added it was obvious from the transcriptions that the first interpreter was not as efficient as the second. This again helps to demonstrate how important the triangulation and interpreting performance was to the research.

Although the main participants in this research project were deaf women and their hearing sisters, the project proposal was developed with the assistance of several key informants. Two women and two men who were teachers at schools for the deaf and provided me with excellent information about the school activities, structure and curicula. These informants were all deaf with the exception of one retired teacher. The information gathered from this preliminary investigation was critical in the development of the proposal and the research questions. These participants spoke from both a professional perspective as educators and in most cases, from the experience of having been a student in a deaf school. The hearing teacher described the early years of the school and the changes throughout her career, including working side-by-side with deaf teachers who were once her students. These informants, along with other deaf people who answered my questions without hesitation over the last five years, provided a

grounding that is vital to any ethnographic research. With their ideas and the literature review behind me, I proceeded to ask questions of Deaf women and their sisters, and let them ask questions of me. This research is certainly an example of collaborative and empowering research which developed a proposition or a question into a process of learning from lived experiences. The people who were interviewed formally or informally were sharing their views and ideas based on their experiences as deaf adults, professionals or deaf educators. Because this research is primarily drawing from the comments of women it was important to have the views of a deaf man and educator before the interviews began. The participation of all informants, not only the hearing sisters and deaf women, must be acknowledged as part of the conclusion. These participants allowed and enabled access to the Deaf community which was absolutely necessarily, though rarely possible, for social science research.

D. Introspective and Predictive Thoughts

Deaf women did not have a problem in communicating their ideas during this research. Hearing women generally did not have a problem expressing their ideas, although one conversation over the phone was definitely difficult due to interpretation problems. For the most part none of the informants in the process had difficulty communicating. However, as the researcher I felt considerable discomfort with my own ability to communicate. I am fluent in sign language and perceive my own language skills to be well above average, yet I found I was having difficulty getting "the answers I wanted". During initial interviews I encountered pauses, reluctance to answer and lack of answers to questions which I felt the Deaf women **"knew"** answers to. After the pilot interview I had learned that some questions elicit more responses than others, however I came to realize that my signing, or rather my signed version of the written questions, was not the best way to handle the interviews.

As a researcher I had written out specific questions, open-ended questions and statements to gather reactions to; however, by following these English words while I signed I threw off most of my initial questions. Through

experience, and by watching myself on video I realized my errors and tried to correct them.

As mentioned in the section on methods, one of the concerns in using sign language is the effect of my English language skills on the participants choice of answers. I felt, more than once, that the answers were being tailored to meet a perceived need for English. I strongly encouraged women to use the mode of language they felt comfortable using, but, by asking for clarification, to check on my understanding or to draw out additional comments, I often saw a change in language choices. This is a problem that has been identified by hearing researchers but one that I was surprised to find affected me as well.

> As novices and as hearing outsiders, we found that the way deaf people signed to us was radically different from the way they signed to each other. Not only did they slow down their signs and articulate them carefully (in deference to "foreigners"), but they arranged their signs in English word order, mouthed English words, and eliminated the most distinctive properties of their own language. (Klima and Bellugi,1979: 2)

It is quite possible that the effect of having a woman, even a deaf woman, ask questions about issues that are "foreign" also produces this code-switching. But I did learn a strategy to get more "native signing" from the interviews. I know now that my ability to communicate ideas previously written in English using American Sign Language is less effective than directly expressing and receiving signed conversation. This helped me gather more data as I was able to engage women in conversation rather than in "interviews". I also was told by two Deaf women that I should NOT translate their responses or my signing. I was in total agreement with the perception that we would lose a great deal by translating. An example was given by one Deaf women who described trying to translate a joke her sister gave her word by word. Of course the translation failed but could have been more successful if the entire joke was translated instead of word by word. My own sense of responsibility and ethics led me to seek out ways to process and report on the data without translating. Several experts were

asked about this problem and the answer was always inevitably to translate the signs and write out the report in English.

Despite the availability of video-disc technology and CD-ROM, it was not practical nor desirable to keep English responses in English and signed responses in sign. As with other primary research in non-English languages, the researcher has an obligation to produce the report in a format understandable by reviewers and readers. In this case, I was frustrated by my inability to include Deaf people in that category of readers. I wanted to be able to show the report to Deaf people and have them understand it, criticize it and use it, but I also wanted to preserve the language mode chosen by the Deaf women. This was my paradox. The research has lost some of what I perceived to be its value and credibility because I could not resolve the problem. As you can see by this report, the option eventually chosen was to translate as much as possible and report on the results, but to produce a video-taped version of the dissertation to provide access for Deaf people. All the women in the research were able to get copies of their own video-tapes and the final written and video-taped report.

As part of the research strategy I took notes and evaluated my own actions in many ways. One of the most difficult problems for me was comparison. It seemed entirely possible to analyse the Deaf women's ideas by watching their responses and clustering themes. Equally possible was reading and re-reading the English transcriptions and original video versions of hearing sisters' interviews and finding themes to describe. However, when I attempted to match ideas or compare across these groups I found myself confused by the modes and unable to find a systematic process that was true to both groups. Eventually I found that I had translated a great deal of the signed answers into English in my head, for purposes of finding themes. It become obvious that in order to compare answers I would need to have both groups responses in the same format. Originally, I had both groups responses in video form but the hearing women spoke their answers, so the videotape was my way to access the signed interpretation but the English transcription was more accurate in representing their choice of language. The choice was made to cluster themes in English but to try to represent

examples in sign language. I was determined to write the report in English but refer to various parts of a video produced as a companion to the report. Even this became impossible due to the very true fact that the examiners would have no way to assess the video or the content of the phrases being excerpted. For this reason, and because there was a need to produce a written document, both deaf and hearing women's answers were documented in English.

Although I had great reservations and felt like I was duplicating the mistakes of previous researchers, I found that it did enable me to make some interesting comparisons. Because the interview format was semi-structured, and due to the length of all interviews, I made the decision to only include responses to standard statements in the comparison section of the report. This enabled a relatively fair pairing of sisters comments because all participants were asked the same question in a series. With a few exceptions, this allowed for a complete set of answers from both deaf and hearing sisters. This turned out to be one of the most effective methods of analysis. In addition to the themes, and the topics mentioned by women which were described as part of the analysis, this comparison provides an opportunity for readers and experts to see the differences between hearing and deaf responses, at the same time as taking into account language differences.

It is my perception, and my hope, that this work is an example of how to include deaf women and hearing women in research that respects their language choices and abilities. I expect that there will be far greater access to Deaf community issues and to gender issues in the Deaf community, once hearing and Deaf researchers develop the skills and interest in communicating with this population. Deaf people have many issues that need to be considered, but until there is communication between deaf and hearing people, there will be isolation. I do not see the Deaf community as a population to be examined, but as a population who grow and learn about themselves. I also believe that hearing people must be encouraged to learn sign language and be able to understand Deaf people without using interpreter. At the same time the profession of interpreting must be developed and supported so that skilled and ethical interpreters can provide

the bridge between Deaf people and non-signing people. There is no need for the Deaf community to be isolated. There is no need for hearing people to be excluded from the rich and beautiful world of Deaf people. But until there is a common understanding of cultural norms, of personal boundaries and political priorities, there will be difference.

In the foreward to their ethnography of a deaf school, Evans and Falk, (1986:v) had this to say:

> As with other utterly powerless and peripheral minorities, the question has been posed whether deaf children "belong" to their own culture or whether they belong to the hearing culture that surrounds them and controls them, particularly in their after-school years.

To open their concluding chapter they used this quote from a deaf man.

> It breeds dependence, stagnation, pettiness, and finally boredom. It is a microcosm that unmercifully tries your individuality. You either surrender to tribal conformity or return to the other world (Evans and Falk, 1986:200).

I cannot and will not accept that these are necessary choices. I predict that with bilingualism and biculturalism both deaf and hearing worlds will be better equipped for raising happy, healthy individuals who are deaf. There are many cultures and many communities that co-exist within out nation. I reject the suggestion that confinement to any one community is a consequence of being deaf, and I suggest that the experiencing deafness as a member of a predominantly hearing society almost guarantees biculturalism given adequate support. People learn culture through both implicit and explicit instruction and can become familiar with a whole range of behaviours throughout their lives. Deafness "per se" does not prevent the learning of culture. Without appropriate support, however, bi-lingualism is not necessarily possible because oral language is not readily available to deaf people, and sign language has yet to become consistently a language of instruction for deaf students. Deaf young people, men and women, can learn to participate effectively in both hearing and deaf communities, as both deaf people and as women or men, if their experiences are made accessible and relevant to their lives.

Other researchers may find different conclusions, and other projects may examine different topics, but no one will ever be able to disprove the existence of "deaf culture" or deny the honesty of pride in being part of the Deaf community. For all outsiders and all participant observers who enter the world of the deaf do so from the "hearing" world. Just as men can try to understand women, and women's experience, but they can only do so from their own standpoints, hearing people will not be able to experience life as a deaf person unless they become deaf. Even so, deafened adults, like myself, are not always enculturated into the Deaf community, and if they are it is provisional on accepting "the Deaf way". As a feminist and as a Deaf woman, I would argue that deafness is not a defect any more than being female is. What society must learn is to value women and Deaf people as much as they value hearing men.

E. Conclusions and Closing Questions

In order to conclude this research the initial suppositions will be reviewed in light of the findings of the project. The two potentially conflicting presuppositions were:

A) hearing women will be more articulate in their ideas and may have less traditional views relating to gender roles compared to deaf women who might express more traditional views on gender roles despite a possible reluctance to identify with them.

B) deaf women will identify more strongly with deaf culture and much less with gender and will therefore express less concern for gender roles than hearing women who may use gender as a major category in their lives.

In the chapter on analysis it was stated that Deaf women in the project primarily identified with deaf culture. Most of the women felt that being able to communicate with other deaf people was extremely important and central to their identities. Clearly this verifies the second supposition that deaf women would identify more strongly with deaf culture. However, there were varying results over the issue of gender identity because as one deaf women put it, she was a "person" first and then deaf, then female but overall a person. Interestingly this same woman also felt sure that other deaf women

would associate primarily with "Deaf culture" rather than being female. Another woman felt she was more accepted by society as a woman so wanted to be affiliated with the positive benefits of being female, yet felt her primary identity was deaf.

The women in this project had a wide range of perceptions about gender roles. They ranged from physical or biological differences to culturally traditional male-female work and parenting roles. There seemed to be more difference between deaf and hearing women as groups than between pairs of sisters. This indicates some support for the proposed explanation that by being deaf, women did not recognize their views on gender yet still held traditional views. By this it is only meant that the deaf women did not "name" their perceptions as gender roles or had not consciously interpreted their own ideas into gender concepts when interviewed. However, some of the deaf women did not have traditional views, and neither did their sisters. So, it is not possible to describe all deaf women in this project as having more traditional views than their sisters, but as a group, hearing women tended to have more modern views on what constituted gender roles. This judgement is made on the basis of both feminist and personal perspectives on socialized gender roles. There is no clear answer as to what male or female roles should be or are in Western Canada. However, for the purposes of this project, and in comparison, deaf women seemed more traditional in their views. This is a very difficult conclusion to draw because it seems unfair to measure deaf and hearing women against a "non-existent" norm. I am suggesting that deaf women are less conscious of gender roles than they are of "deaf roles". I am not convinced that deaf women or their hearing sisters can be compared in this way, but in this research the interviews and conversations led me to this conclusion.

This project has only touched on some of the issues affecting the meanings of gender for deaf women, and certainly has not begun to understand the differences between them and hearing women. This was an opportunity to ask questions and give women a chance to express their feelings, but it was also a chance to develop more questions. Some of these questions include:

What are the meanings of gender to Deaf men?

Are these meanings different than their hearing brothers?
Do deaf women and deaf men have more traditional roles in marriage than non-deaf couples?
What roles do deaf people who marry hearing people take on?
What roles do same-sex deaf people take when in partnership?
What roles would same-sex couples take if one was deaf and the other hearing?
What are the meanings of gender for hearing children raised by deaf parents?
Do deaf people have stricter gender roles and penalties for deviance than hearing people?
Do schools for the deaf promote gender equity through curicula and extracurricular activities?
What impact would mainstreaming have on deaf students gender concepts?
What are the differences in employment discrimination between sexism and discrimination on the basis of deafness?
How can hearing parents enable their deaf children to learn family roles?
How can sign language be reproduced along side written or spoken English?
How can hearing women learn about deaf culture?
What is the benefit of a gender-neutral/androgynous approach to sign linguistics?

As you can imagine, these questions could keep researchers busy for many years. But as a first priority, all research that involves Deaf people must be validated by the deaf so that it is empowering research and services their needs as much as it services the needs of social science. There are many more questions to be asked, but Deaf women, and men, need to be the ones to ask, and answer the questions important to them. In all honesty, I hope that this project will be an important step in the liberation of Deaf women.

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APPENDIX A

RESEARCH ON GENDER AND DEAF WOMEN AND THEIR SISTERS

This is a confidential document. Please fill in the top part and bottom part with a code and the sheet will be detached and analysed separately.
RESEARCHER: TANIS DOE

Thank you for your co-operation- If you need help please ask

Name
Address
Phone /TTY
FAX if you have one. DISC USER:

Date: FIVE DIGIT CODE ___ ___ ___ ___ ___

AGE _____ AGE/YR of Leaving High School

_____

Present Occupation _____Salary range:

Previous Jobs/income levels

_____

Relationship status:

_____

(i.e. single, divorced, living with partner etc)
If partner has income and contributes to household costs what is the average income and occupation of the partner?

_____

Religion of Family _____ Personal Faith/Religion_____

Racial or ethnic orgin of your family _____

Do you have children? _____ Ages/

Male/Female_____

Highest level of education _____ What year?_____

What did you study? What courses/degree/diploma?

Any disabilities - deaf - blind - emotional- physical disabilities? Please explain any

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Any other important information you would like to add? Please use reverse.

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APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENATION

	HEARING	DEAF	FAMILY
PAIR A	AGE : 33	AGE : 43	French-Canadian
	Married	Widowed	3 deaf brothers
CHILDREN	Ages 8, 6	Ages 18, 19	
WORK	Bank Service Representative	Housewife/ Computer operator	
EDUCATION	High School	Deaf school and data entry certificate	
PAIR B	AGE : 45	AGE : 43	Ukranian/ German
	Married	Divorced/Remarried	2 hearing sisters
CHILDREN	Ages 11,13	Age 11	
WORK	Half-time teacher	Public Service Clerk	
EDUCATION	B.Phys Ed. M.A. (Kinesiology)	B.A. Gallaudet and university courses	
PAIR C	AGE : 36	AGE : 39	Anglo-Canadian
	Married	Divorced	deaf parents
CHILDREN	Ages 8, 10	Age 11	
WORK	Sign Language Interpreter	Sign Language Instructor	
EDUCATION	High School and Interpreter Training Certificate	B.S.W. Gallaudet	
PAIR D	AGE : 46	AGE : 48	Anglo-Canadian
	Married	Single	
CHILDREN	Ages 22, 24	none	
WORK	Self-employed/ Housewife	Teacher	
EDUCATION	Education degree	BA Gallaudet, M.Ed.	
PAIR E	AGE : 36	AGE : 45	Finnish-Canadian
	Married	Married	2 sisters
CHILDREN	none	Ages 21, 19	
WORK	Engineering student (current)	Public Service Clerk	
EDUCATION	Civil Engineering diploma	Deaf School / Word Processing Course	